

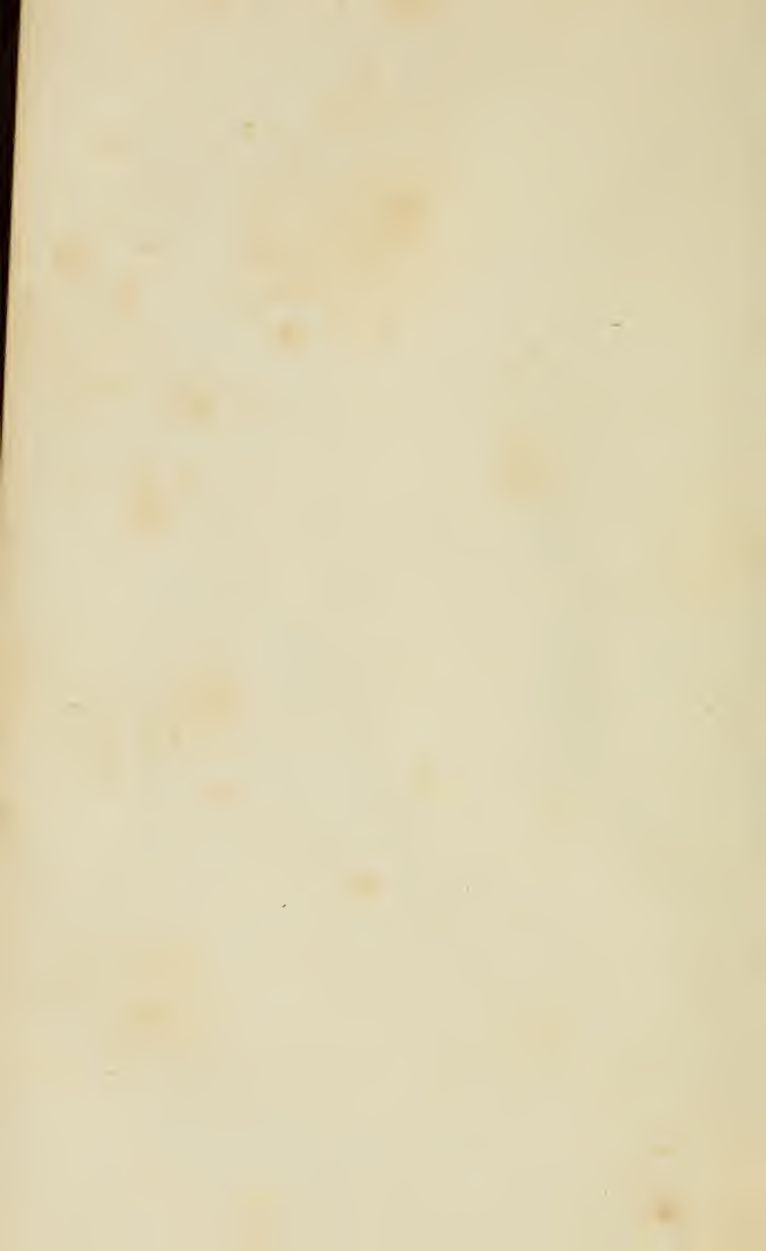
FROM THE LIBRARY OF
REV. LOUIS FITZGERALD BENSON, D. D.
BEQUEATHED BY HIM TO
THE LIBRARY OF
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Division

Section

SCB
14202





DEC 16 1936
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE
HISTORY
OF
FORTY CHOIRS.

✓
BY THOMAS HASTINGS,
AUTHOR OF "DISSERTATION ON MUSICAL TASTE," AND VARIOUS
MUSICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS.

"History is Philosophy teaching by example."

NEW YORK:
MASON BROTHERS, 23 PARK ROW.

1854.


Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853, by
MASON BROTHERS,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District
of New York.

STEREOTYPED BY
THOMAS B. SMITH,
216 William Street, N. Y.

PRINTED BY
JOHN A. GRAY,
97 Cliff St. N. Y.

P r e f a c e .

THE incidents embraced in the following sketches are substantially true: though varied in detail. The leading object has been to afford useful instruction, in such manner as to avoid unpleasant personalities. While no individual will here recognize his own likeness, multitudes, it is supposed, may discover characteristic features, which are not unworthy of their contemplation.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

<http://archive.org/details/histor00hast>

CONTENTS.



I.

A MECHANICAL TEACHER.

	PAGE
Good moral principles—Social gatherings—Elementary drilling—Social Feelings for Social Music—Taste and Piety neglected—Music dull and unimpressive.....	11

II.

THE NEW ORGAN AND THE BRASS-BAND TEACHER.

An Organ procured for wrong purposes—Miserably played for years—A better player and a brass-band vocalist—Better counsels succeed.....	16
--	----

III.

A PASTOR WITHOUT MUSICAL TASTE.

Bible instructions not investigated—Injuries resulting—A wicked chorister tolerated	21
---	----

IV.

A TALENTED GOOD MAN, BUT A NERVOUS TEACHER.

Singers troubled with wandering thoughts—Bad philosophy in teaching—Wrong emotions habitually cherished in connection with right convictions of responsibility.....	24
---	----

V.

CHOIR-SINGING MADE RESPECTABLE.

Rev. Mr. R——'s excellent management—His argument with Miss M——.—A noble example of a volunteer choir—The pastor's attentions remitted—Danger arises—It is successfully met—Defeat of Messrs. Superficial and Flourish—Difficulties readily obviated.....	29
--	----

VI.

MERE SKILL UNSUCCESSFUL.

Complaint of the indifference of pastor and people to the performances of the choir—The singers are not worshippers—The pastor unconsciously flatters their self-esteem—Wrong ideas of musical efficiency.....	40
--	----

VII.

WANT OF CO-OPERATION.

	PAGE
Wrong notions of music—Timid policy—Ungodliness of the singers—Another chor- ister fails to effect a salutary reform, merely because he is not sustained by the church or the pastor.....	46

VIII.

CULTURE AND COMMON SENSE.

A good pastor procures a teacher who is conscientious and willing to be directed— Inculcates Scriptural views irrespective of artistic pretensions—Worship in the school, &c.—Good results.....	55
---	----

IX.

A CHOIR REBUKED, OFFENDED AND RECLAIMED.

The pastor has no taste for music—Singers left to their own direction—Grow inde- pendent, and exacting, and ungodly—They are publicly rebuked and offended, but finally reclaimed—Difficulties might have been prevented.....	61
---	----

X.

OUT OF TUNE.

A new church edifice—The choir perpetually out of tune for years—An easy remedy applied—Success.....	69
---	----

XI.

UNACCEPTABLE IMPROVEMENTS.

Deacon Aimwell—Old-fashioned style—New music produces dissatisfaction—Several changes—Constant uneasiness—Taste of the people should have been consulted..	71
---	----

XII.

A BOISTEROUS LEADER.

More appetite than taste—Little progress of improvement—Personal influence has a deadening effect upon the music.....	77
--	----

XIII.

BAD LOCATION.

Want of room—Disadvantages of location—The choir necessarily small, well-disci- plined, well-disposed, but overwhelmed by the untutored voices of the assembly.	81
--	----

CONTENTS.

vii

XIV.

INFLUENCES RIGHT, BUT NOT PERPETUATED.

	PAGE
Rude congregational style happily improved by the good management of a pastor— He dies, and is succeeded by one who leaves the interest in charge of an ambi- tious artist.....	83

XV.

A FICKLE PEOPLE.

Wish to avoid trouble—Parsimony—Impatient of results—Perpetual changes to no good purpose.....	89
---	----

XVI.

AN ORGANIST A WOULD-BE LEADER.

An excellent choir—Good influences for years—An organ—A whimsical, ambitious player makes trouble—Assumes the direction—The choir leave, and everything is unstable.....	92
--	----

XVII.

BACKWARD AND FORWARD.

Speed without progress—Changes as to tunes and teachers—Ultimate onward pro- gress.....	98
--	----

XVIII.

AN INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE FOR CITY CHURCHES.

An old church destroyed by the rush of commerce—Good devotional music—How obtained—Its happy experiments and results—Its example not lost.....	104
---	-----

XIX.

SABBATH CONCERTS.

A discussion between two teachers—An artistic choir—Strong Influences of the mu- sic—Sentimentalism—Discovery of this evil—Reform.....	109
---	-----

XX.

RIVAL LEADERS RECONCILED.

Two rival leaders—Good men and beloved—The difficulty was merely a matter of taste—Condescension in one of the parties—A happy reconciliation—Progress of taste and spirituality.....	116
---	-----

XXI.

TASTE IMPROVES BUT SLOWLY.

An excellent choir, prosper for years—Never duly consulted the taste of the people— A reaction—Long-continued deterioration—Taste at length begins at the founda- tion, and builds upward successfully.....	122
---	-----

XXII.

NECESSITY OF GOOD LEADERS.

	PAGE
A good, faithful choir afflicted by a succession of incompetent, eccentric leaders—A remedy at hand.....	130

XXIII.

A CHOIR CONVERTED.

The pastor loves art—The choir sing tastefully, and indulge in pleasing sentimentality—Too much self-esteem—Another pastor discovers this evil, and sees the reward of his faithful dealing.....	137
--	-----

XXIV.

A LEADER GETTING BEHIND THE AGE.

Singing made respectable in consequence of a pastor's appeal—The teacher becomes a happy, successful leader for many years—But at length loses his influence by yielding too little in the new circumstances in which he is placed—He resigns—Difficulties arise for years—He is recalled, but declines the appointment—Ultimately a pious organist assumes the direction with new success—The people learn the necessity of lending their co-operation.....	143
--	-----

XXV.

A PEEP BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

A rude choir of ungodly singers—Election returns mingle with responses in prayer—A complaint—A reprimand—Nothing more.....	150
--	-----

XXVI.

OLD FOLKS VS. YOUNG.

Patent Notes—General ignorance of Notation—Old and young members of the choir at strife: the one against innovations, the other in favor of progress—Rival schools—A friendly adviser—He fails to produce an adjustment—The meeting for the purpose grows clamorous—He makes a tender, solemn appeal, and retires—This proves effectual.....	153
--	-----

XXVII.

DIFFICULTIES IN A CITY CHOIR.

Unfavorable circumstances of a general nature—Various methods which are unsuccessful—Several scenes in illustration—A happy permanent change—How effected	160
---	-----

XXVIII.

A TALENTED, BUT IMMORAL CHORISTER.

"Punching" music—The violin—Falling from the pitch—A talented leader becomes vicious and hypocritical—Makes trouble—Finally leaves in disgrace.....	169
---	-----

XXIX.

FUN AT SINGING SCHOOLS.

	PAGE
"Foreign composers" discarded—Singular publications—Singing schools for amusement—Merriment, with little progress—Ultimate reform.....	174

XXX.

OLD TUNES VS. NEW.

Complaints against new tunes—A discussion—Pastoral reproof—A committee to consult with the leader—Wise and kind treatment—The second interview terminates all difficulty.....	181
---	-----

XXXI.

MAL-ADAPTATIONS.

Secular songs to sacred words—The device displeases—Ultimate disgust—Popular melodies without secular associations—Their great success.....	191
---	-----

XXXII.

DESPISING CULTIVATION.

A clergyman, physician, and lawyer, entertain illiberal prejudices—Their example of neglect is followed—Prolonged ill consequences.....	196
---	-----

XXXIII.

A THEATRICAL SOPRANO SINGER.

Splendid church edifice—Pecuniary liabilities—An unpopular pastor—A popular choir—A distinguished soprano excites attention—House crowded—Pews sold—Singing declines—Another pastor with popular attractions—Music neglected—Reasons.....	200
---	-----

XXXIV & XXXV.

RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO CHORISTERS.

Causes of rivalry—Promote industry and artistic success, but hinder the progress of real taste—Lead to barrenness in spirituality—The evil discovered and prevented by a cultivation of brotherly love—Union rehearsals—Pleasing results.....	206
---	-----

XXXVI.

A DEACON AFRAID OF THE EXHIBITION OF TRUTH.

The pastor holds an argument with his deacon on the claims of church music—He will preach on the subject—The deacon thinks it unadvisable—The pastor redeems his pledge—Satisfactory results.....	209
---	-----

XXXVII.

TACT AT CONCEALING BLUNDERS.

	PAGE
Blunders in singing need not always be exposed—Anecdotes in illustration—Chor- isters should be supplied with a list of hymns by the clergyman on all occasions of public worship.....	215

XXXVIII.

“BOUGHT OFF.”

Industrious training—A fine volunteer choir—Singers bought off to supply deficien- cies in other choirs—Singing declines—The chorister complains that all his pupils are mercenary—He resigns the situation.....	218
--	-----

XXXIX.

THE MISTAKE OF AN EXCELLENT LEADER.

Gratuitous training and direction of a choir—Unbounded influence of the leader— The people gain none of his practical wisdom—After ill health has disabled him, he discovers the sad influences of this omission.....	222
---	-----

XL.

A BRIGHT EXAMPLE.

Examples of success afford less incident than those of an opposite nature—It must not be inferred that such examples have been few—Many similar to the one here described—A pastor with a small amount of musical knowledge, taking the Bible for his guide, easily secures right influences.....	225
--	-----

CONCLUSION.

Considerations suggested by the preceding sketches.....	229
---	-----

I.

A MECHANICAL TEACHER.

“That shunning faults one quiet tenor keep,
We cannot blame indeed, but we may sleep.”—POPE.

THE large choir of the old Church in the flourishing town of A——, embraced a few individuals who were guided by religious considerations. The performances were above mediocrity in point of skill, but they were deficient in animation and spirituality. The rhythm, the harmony, and the melody, gave evidence of much practice, and the selection of tunes was seldom offensive to good taste. Still the music was wanting in character. It was dull. It moved heavily. It was destitute of variety, and deficient in pathos and solemnity. It exerted in time of worship but little influence either, upon the singers or upon the congregation.

The causes of this failure may be easily explained. The choir in earlier years had several teachers that knew but little, and charged but little for their services. Subsequently they were trained from time to time by a teacher who, though superior in some respects to his predecessors, was a rude mechanist in art. He was a real plodder, a mere journeyman in sol-misation.

When his pupils had learned to read plain music, and to sing it with tolerable accuracy, his task was accomplished. He could pretend to nothing more. This teacher, however, had

been recommended to the choir as a man of skill. His charges were reasonable, and his morals correct. Those who had more taste would demand a greater compensation for their labors. Schools were designed for novices in music. Great refinement was not necessary, and singers might "acquire taste without so much teaching." Such was the reasoning employed on the subject; but the secret was, the singers had a greater love for the social pleasures of a school, than for sound improvement. The teacher was a companionable man, and not very exacting in his requirements. Consequently he was just the person for them.

The schools were virtually social gatherings. They brought together under pleasant circumstances, the young people of the village. The latter would listen politely to what he thought fit to say, and give for the moment, some attention to the practical exercises, but the details were not treasured in memory. They were treated like formalities, which might well be forgotten. In the midst of every evening there would be a recess for free and lively conversation, such as might be witnessed at a social party. There was no absolute rudeness on these occasions. But amusing incidents would occur, and feats of comicality be performed, all tending to promote merriment and hilarity.

Had these gatherings been designed for the practice of social music, they would have been in character; for how are we to cultivate the secular style without the indulgence of corresponding sentimentalities? The man who would practice a martial song must carry his thoughts into the tented field, and the man who would sing a "merry ballad or catch," must enter fully into the mirth of what he is practising. This is right. It is in accordance with the teachings of art. But to indulge such thoughts and feelings in connection with music intended for the purposes of religious worship, would be incongruous and in-

appropriate. It would be as contrary to the demands of art, as to the interests of religion. The choir never thought of this distinction, but they lost much through the habitual violation of it. The tunes which had been practiced under such circumstances, were far from awakening hallowed associations. Those of the choir who did not claim to be worshippers, felt at church a loss of interest which they could not understand. To them the scene was so unlike that of the practice-room, as to give impressions of melancholy. The rest of the singers had to contend with thoughts and feelings of worldliness, which the music by the power of association was perpetually bringing to mind. So long, so habitually, and so intimately had scenes of pleasure and merriment been connected with the practice of that music in schools and rehearsals, that no effort of the mind could wholly dissociate them in the time of worship. The trouble on such occasions was naturally referred to a special attack of the adversary of souls. But that evil personage had previously accomplished his work in the practice-room, and might now have been attending to other matters. Temptation, so to speak, had been wrought into the music itself. It had become a species of mechanism which would work without his special bidding.

The cause here assigned might alone suffice to account for the failure of the music. But there was another which was equally efficient. All the training for a course of years, we have seen was elementary. If taste is to be cultivated, the mind must be allowed occasionally to dwell on æsthetic considerations, and give itself up to emotional influences. This condition is indispensable. But it was unknown and disregarded; hence the uninterrupted process of drilling formed literally a systematic hinderance to the progress of taste. Necessary as drilling is in its proper place, it can do no more towards securing musical expression, than chattering over the declensions

and conjugations of syntax can towards perfecting a taste for belles lettres.

A similar remark may also be made in reference to the spirit of praise. This spirit can never be acquired by an exclusive attention to artistic observances. These are not without their importance. The man who would become a good timeist must be tasked with rhythmical exercises. He who would improve his voice, must be thoroughly trained in tone and intonation; and he who would learn to read music with fluency, must occupy his mind with scales and intervals, and the entire catalogue of musical characters. If all this is to be done thoroughly, the mind must for a time be abstracted from other considerations. But if the pupils are faithful, the ends of drilling will soon in a measure be accomplished. Reading and the rules of style will become familiar. The mind can then be liberated. It can be set free, at least occasionally, from the entanglements of manner, and be allowed to indulge in religious reflections. This is indispensable.

But the members of the choir, as we have seen, were not studious. They cherished no adequate feelings of responsibility. Their object was amusement. The lessons were evils, to be tolerated and forgotten. Reading continued to be a difficult exercise, and the plainest rudiments of style were seldom fully mastered. Elementary exercises, therefore, were perpetuated. There was no progress from year to year. The drillings were as monotonous and as constant as the operations of a tread-mill, and about as interesting. Still they claimed sufficient attention to embarrass and pre-occupy the mind. Devotion requires its votaries to fix their thoughts intently upon spiritual objects. The teacher exerted himself from year to year to confine the mind to musical rules. His entire efforts were in this direction. No other training was familiar to him, and he knew the neces-

sity of no other. No wonder, therefore, that in connection with great dulness of manner, there should have been such a decided and such a constant want of emotional efficiency.

The adverse influences were not confined to the choir. The music excited but little attention. The hymns were not distinctly uttered. The hymn-books would lie unopened, or be regarded in a listless manner. The people did not understand their duty. They were not well informed as to the nature of praise. They had formed their estimate of its utility, not by searching the Scriptures, but by taking counsel of the traditions of men, in connection with their own defective experience. The music was said to be good. But there was little in the performances which could please the taste or kindle the feelings of devotion. There were no strifes or divisions among the singers. They plodded on in their dulness from year to year, with undisturbed unanimity. There was no ambition to excel. They were seldom severely tasked. They had sufficient accommodations in the choir for all who might join them.

What could the tempter have gained by exciting disturbances in such a choir? Dull, uninteresting, formal offerings of praise might be more to his purpose than excitements, which would awaken discussion. But should a truly consecrated spirit begin to show itself, there would soon be trouble. The adversary would bestir himself. The confirmed influence of wrong motives, wrong teaching, wrong practice, and bad results, would be altogether in his favor.

Reform under such circumstances would be a herculean undertaking. It would require time, and effort, and patience, and self-denying perseverance. Yet, in how many congregations of the land do we witness this exact state of things! A careful investigation, in regard to the office of praise among Christian worshippers, would no doubt produce fearful revelations.

II.

THE NEW ORGAN AND THE BRASS-BAND TEACHER.

• “ Friend, quoth the sage, that fine machine contains
Exacter numbers and diviner strains :
• • • • •
But yet to wake them, rouse them, and inspire,
Asks a fine finger and a touch of fire.”—CAWTHORNE.

THE organ, rightly employed, is a fine accompanying instrument. Nothing can equal it. Its immense harmonic resources, and its countless varieties of tone, place it at the head of all instruments for the use of the church. An instrument of such extensive powers, however, should not be intrusted to the guidance of unskilful hands.

Some years ago, the good people in a certain parish in New England found great difficulty in sustaining their singing. There was so little talent in the choir and so little taste in the congregation, that every effort towards improvement had been ineffectual. In this dilemma, the parish thought it advisable to procure an organ. The instrument would prove an object of attraction. It would diffuse taste among the people. It would give facility to vocal culture ; and, in short, it would perform mechanically, they imagined, almost everything desirable in this department of public worship. The difficulty of securing a good player did not then occur to them. If only the purchase-money could be raised, and the instrument be procured, their

anxieties would be at an end. The object was accomplished. The builder in due time put up the organ, and "showed off" in commonplace flourishes its various stops and combinations. The impression was delightful, and the people were satisfied with their purchase.

It was now time to look for a player. The first one who offered was "a *natural* musician." He knew nothing of rules, but depended wholly upon his ear. He had indeed a staff, but it was a wooden one, a veritable walking-stick, supplied with significant notches and curvatures, such as would remind you of the rude original of the music-staff of modern days. By the use of this staff he had managed to play without other assistance. This, though the man was no antiquarian, was going back to the beginning of things. But the onward progress was slow. The organ groaned under its hard treatment, and the people responded till the seat of the executant was vacated.

The next performer had but a slight knowledge of musical characters. He was a perfect smatterer. At some former time, he had taken six or eight lessons of a distinguished master. He could now, by the closest attention, sustain the air and bass of so plain a tune as Marlow, filling up the intermediate parts in the score according to his own fancy or convenience. But such playing! The jargon was intolerable. Yet, what was to be done? The young man had volunteered his services. He belonged to an influential family, and expected in due time, no doubt, to become a distinguished player. Happily for the choir and congregation, he soon changed his mind, and took passage in a steamer for the South.

He was succeeded by a young school girl, who had been taught to play songs and waltzes on the piano-forte. She had not sought the situation, but took her seat very modestly after many pressing solicitations. Of course, she knew nothing of

harmony. She did her best to give satisfaction. But the organ would often interfere with and chafe the singers ; and her touch was the energetic staccato stroke of the pianist, producing such perpetual puffs and wheezes and rattlings of the keys, as if the instrument had caught the asthma !

Next in train came a gentleman who had some knowledge of harmony ; but his touches were rude and awkward, and he knew little of vocal effect, and was unacquainted with the rules which should regulate an accompaniment. However, as he could manage to keep the “ machine upon the right track,” some improvement might be anticipated. Many of the choir who had left in discouragement began to return. Their numbers increased. It was a pleasant thing for untutored voices to go up to the organ, and be unwittingly guided by its dictations. But as the music was beginning slowly to improve, the organist was called to another situation on a small salary.

Several changes ensued, which were less noticeable. One player knew so little of the stops as to produce bad combinations. Another had a great abhorrence of interludes, chiefly, as was supposed, because he was deficient in invention. A third would play such merry voluntaries, as were ill in keeping with the solemnities of the place ; and a fourth was irregular and irreverent in his deportment. He was evidently of the tribe of Tobiah and Sanballat. But at length there came to reside in the village a foreigner, who, though ignorant of American music, was well acquainted with the organ.

This, after so many scenes of disquietude, was a joyous event. The man was modest as well as skilful. He was quite willing to be directed. He made no pretensions to *vocal* music ; but thought there was “ at present, some need of instruction.” His suggestion was acted upon. The instructor they selected, though not remarkable for vocal talent, had once belonged to

the full chorus of an oratorio. Those who are unacquainted with oratorical arrangements, have no idea what an amount of "raw material is worked up" in those massive combinations of voices and instruments. The teacher they engaged was an instructive specimen. His usual employment was to teach brass bands. To give instruction in psalmody was a new thing to him. He had no particular fancy for it, unless he could be supplied with brazen-throated pupils. He would have them pour forth in no stinted measure. Vocal delivery was with him a matter of no account. He did not understand it. Noise was everything. His manner was loud, boisterous, and irreverent.

Such was the teacher. The pupils were pleased with him, and when his school had terminated, he settled in the place, consenting, for a small salary, to act as chorister. The choir lost all their dulness. There was no lack of animation. The moment the organist was ready, every one was on the alert. The instrument would discourse marvellously. The voices were a full match for it. Everything was buoyant and joyous. Plaintive music was regarded as dull and insipid, and when pathetic hymns were given out, the singers would find it convenient to take bright views of the subject before them, and sound forth in joyous strains. All their music was of the same character, loud and vehement. It was such, however, as the people were inclined to regard with favor. Though it was "not particularly devotional," it disappointed no expectations. The experience of the church in this matter had always been deficient. Time had been when its members constituted no inconsiderable portion of the choir. But they never fully apprehended the nature of their position, and not being much benefited, they gradually withdrew, till all the seats were occupied with other incumbents. The latter continued to maintain a grave and becoming deportment, for in most points they had been religious-

ly educated. But, they were no cynics on week-days. Some of them belonged to a noisy, facetious club, some to cotillion parties, and some, as often as they visited the adjacent city, would be seen at the circus and the theatre.

Such was the state of psalmody in that parish. And can it be supposed that the *office-work of praise* was rightly fulfilled, under such circumstances? We think not. The most important elements were wanting. The music was virtually instrumental. The voice said nothing, asked nothing, confessed nothing. Emotions were inappropriate. There was no commitment of soul. The singers were not seriously-minded. The singing was as deficient in manner as in spirit.

But an important change was evidently near at hand. Such inappropriate music as we have described could not *always* be tolerated. Already a want was beginning to be felt, which nothing but Christian principle and Christian influence could fully satisfy. The subject became a matter of calm discussion and inquiry. Better counsels at length prevailed. After so much mismanagement, and ignorance, and misconception, and culpable indifference, the true foundations of religious music were permanently laid. Intelligence and piety assumed the direction. The organ then became a different instrument. It was no longer the chief object of attention, but a pleasing auxiliary to the voice of humble, intelligent, heart-felt praise. It was then seen by that people that such an instrument should not be procured without sufficient reason, or be confided to the charge of an incompetent organist. It was seen also, that church-music is one of those interests which should be highly prized and perpetually cherished, and that measures for its improvement should never be adopted without some knowledge of their practical tendency. These important lessons will long be remembered.

III.

A PASTOR WITHOUT MUSICAL TASTE.

“What saith the Scripture?”—ROM. 4: 3.—GAL. 4: 30.

“THE matter has not been so considered,” said one, in terminating an animated conversation. *Not so considered!* But *how ought it to be* considered? That was the real question at issue. The individual referred to was a talented young clergyman, who, without mature reflection, thus disposed of the scriptural argument against systematic formalism, in the office of praise. He was “unacquainted with music:” and it was not for him to “interfere with existing arrangements.” Though evidently hard pressed with the argument he had been hearing, there was no rudeness or discourtesy in his remarks. But the car-bell had rung, and he must be on board; and so he dismissed the subject by falling back upon public opinion.

But there was a peculiar unhappiness in the case. His people had recently been lectured on the subject, and had been partially aroused to effort. Some of the influential members of the church had taken their seats in the choir. The music, however, was still led by a very ungodly chorister; because no other person had as yet gained sufficient skill for sustaining the duties of that office. The church might have procured a better leader. They were bound to do so; and half believed themselves involved in that obligation. But during the brief period

of instruction which had been enjoyed, the pastor had been absent, and knew nothing of the considerations which had been presented ; and when the delicate question of a change of chorister came before him, he very naturally referred to the practice of other churches ; and thus, at a critical moment, threw the weight of his influence into the wrong side of the scale. Most of the singers were young and inconsiderate. The pious members of the choir felt grieved and disheartened. Their efforts were beginning to be withdrawn ; and the good impressions which had been left upon the minds of the people were gradually diminished.

The young pastor, though he knew it not, had virtually decided against the progress of reform ; and this was the reason why the lecturer, accidentally meeting with him in another part of the country, had endeavored to lead him to the maintenance of right views. He reasoned with him from the nature of our holy religion, "God looketh upon the heart." He reasoned from Scripture examples. David did not write the fifty-first Psalm for the promotion of musical effect, but for a deep, heart-broken confession of sin. Paul and Silas, in the depths of a dismal dungeon, were not giving a musical soiree, but pouring out their souls in holy offerings of praise. The songs of heaven, as recorded in the Apocalypse, were not in character like musical interludes, but rapturous outbursts of holy joy, in view of certain wonderful events and transactions. He reasoned from the definition of the word *sing* contained in the Scripture precepts. It there conveys the idea of melodious verbal utterance. Musical history establishes this definition. Such an utterance in a solemn act of worship, should never be merely artistic. And finally, he reasoned from precepts and illustrations given by the Apostle Paul,* who insists that singers are bound

* See 1 Corinth. 14 : 19, &c. ; Ephesians, 5 : 18, 19, and Colossians, 3 : 16.

to speak intelligibly and from the heart, to each other and to God, in their songs ; being filled with the Spirit, while the word of God dwells richly within them.

But, because the pastor had acquired no knowledge of music, the requisites and pre-requisites named by the Apostle on this subject, it seems, had never attracted his attention. He had viewed the whole subject from a different stand point—that of imaginary *native* deficiencies. Good people entertained different views in the matter ; and why should *he* trouble himself respecting it, since *Nature* had *denied* him the power of making accurate discriminations ? And what if he could not at once resist the lecturer's argument ; there was probably some escape from it. Men long devoted to a single subject are liable to become ultra. It will never answer to press a point too far in matters of taste. With such considerations as these, the young pastor closed the interview ; and when he returned to his flock, other interests engrossed his attention. So the chorister continued to indulge in profaneness on week days, and to lead in the praises of God with visage sanctimonious on the Sabbath. This abuse continued for years, till the pastor was called to another field of labor. The people soon forgot the impressions of the lecturer, fell into their former habits of neglect, and learned to enjoy the performances of the choir, as pleasant interludes to diversify the public exercises of worship.

Should not some method be devised by the friends of theological seminaries for the better training of the “ sons of the prophets,” in regard to the office of praise ? Whether they can sing or not, there is much that they might be prepared to do, for the right ordering of arrangements, and for the promotion of religious influences in the music of the church. And who has ever known right influences to prevail for any time, in this department of worship, under the disadvantage of pastoral neglect or misdirection ?

IV.

A TALENTED GOOD MAN, BUT A NERVOUS TEACHER.

———"Prudent, cautious self-control,
Is wisdom's root."—BURNS.

As you approach from an eastern direction, the pleasant village of B——, the first object which meets your eye is the tall spire of a church, which is a fitting emblem of the heavenly aspirations of the people who worship there. They are remarkable for sound intelligence and Christian consistency. Their benevolence and liberality are proverbial. They have always had excellent preaching. Prayers have been fervent and spiritual, but the singing has been deficient in devotional character. It has not seemed to be in keeping with the other exercises. The members of the choir have usually maintained a becoming seriousness of deportment. Tunes have been good. But the performances, though not very deficient in skill, have generally exhibited a want of animation. The more conscientious members of the choir have for a series of years been perplexed with wandering thoughts and conflicting emotions. The music seems not to have aided their devotions, or to have produced right influences upon the silent worshippers of the congregation.

The causes of this failure are involved in no mystery. That choir had a teacher from time to time, whose qualifications were

peculiar. He was an industrious man, and occasionally a severe disciplinarian, but, unfortunately, he was of a very nervous temperament. He was one of those good people who have not quite enough of religion to make them comfortable. There are many such persons in this world of ours. They too often invert the terms of the inspired maxim in regard to worldliness, seeking first the things of this world, with the expectation that heavenly things will be superadded. Hence they are frequently in darkness and perplexity, and are remiss in duty and deficient in self-discipline. One who is of a nervous temperament is peculiarly subject to such experiences. The teacher was greatly influenced by trifling circumstances. When the weather was stormy, or when the east wind blew, he was sure to be gloomy and irritable. His manner would then be severe. Nothing would seem to please him. The pupils would be so late in coming, the school would be so noisy, the singing would be out of pitch, or in bad time, and the voices would be rough, hard, and unmanageable. The singers would be so negligent of style and heedless of improvement, as almost to give him the idea that they were amusing themselves at his expense. But when the weather was clear and the air elastic, he would be quite a different sort of man. His spirits would be unduly exhilarated. He would be so easily pleased as to be superficial in his teaching, and lax in his discipline. He had, at such times, a high sense of the ridiculous. His criticisms would be trivial, his remarks eccentric, and his illustrations comical. His whole deportment would be so amusing as to call forth in the school many a significant smile, the exact import of which, he would not fully comprehend. His pupils pitied him. They formed a high estimate of his talents, and were willing to bear with infirmities which were "so indicative of genius." In truth, "he had some good points about him."

He was active, industrious, and conscientious. He insisted upon good vocal delivery. He was solicitous also to secure the right treatment of sacred words, and would often refer to the importance of that subject. But it was difficult for his pupils to imagine how either peevishness or merriment could co-exist with sentiments of religious veneration.

Such were the peculiarities of the teacher. He was a good man, but a bad philosopher. He labored hard, and brought little to pass beyond the elementary traits of style. Emotions will not spring up at the biddings of criticism. It is only when we are musing upon some specific object, that they are wont to kindle. Religious affections also observe the same general law. They are called forth by the contemplation of divine things, and not by chafing remarks or comical illustrations.

The teacher entertained correct notions of the office of praise. His theory was faultless. His views of obligation were discriminating, and he made them familiar to his pupils. He regarded praise as a spiritual exercise, a solemn religious duty. His remarks upon it were usually just, and sometimes eloquent. Nor was it possible for his pupils to misapprehend his meaning. Their conscience was enlightened. There was impressed upon their minds a deep sense of responsibility. Yet excellent as was the teacher's theory in this respect, he was not successful in reducing it to practice. The mind was constantly pre-occupied. It was never loosed from its entanglements. Worship and criticism, convictions of duty and artistic considerations, were left to struggle on together, and that, under the influence of peevishness or humorous eccentricities, without any prospect of a satisfactory issue. The teacher was inculcating practical impossibilities. In fact, he was producing by such mismanagement, the very mental habits, which were afterwards to cause such constant embarrassments of thought, in seasons of public worship.

But this was not all. The teacher knew the importance of obtaining the Divine blessing, and was disposed to seek it by earnest prayer in the presence of the school. This was right. A temperament like his, might have been benefited by such an exercise during the entire evening. It might have strengthened his convictions of responsibility, and made him more watchful over his own spirit. It might have kept his mind in better balance, and in more desirable frames. It might also have proved very advantageous to his pupils. The remembrance of having sought divine direction and guidance at the commencement of the exercises, might have operated through the evening as a check upon untoward propensities, and as a stimulus to greater exertions. The teacher, however, saw this subject rather dimly, and the single consideration that his pupils were not punctual at the hour of meeting, led him to defer the exercise of prayer till the close of the evening, when its most desirable advantages would be nearly lost. The peculiar blessings were not sought, till the time for receiving them had passed away. The prayers were at that late hour either inconsistently in the *pluperfect** tense, or they were so general and indefinite, as to savor of indifference and formality.

Thus we have seen in detail the principal causes of failure in the performances of this choir in church. The embarrassments under which the singers have been so long and so painfully laboring, have been the inevitable result of misguided instruction. The mind cannot be everywhere at once. It cannot engage at the same moment in worship and in criticism. Nor can it acquire right habits and associations by the appliances of severity, peevishness, or merriment. If the mind is to claim its entire freedom in hours of devotion, it must be taught by experience occasionally to liberate itself, in the exercises of the practice-

* i. e. "May we have been blessed," &c.

room, from the drudgery of drilling. In praise, just as in prayer, the great Object of our adorations should be made to fill the entire vision. How shall this be done, if all the hours of instruction and preparation are spent in producing habits and associations which bring the mind into perpetual captivity. What if clerical elocution were to be taught in such a manner? What if the mind were to be so misguided and enslaved, in reference to the diction and the utterance of social prayer?

The special troubles of this choir ought not to surprise us. There is nothing in them of novelty, nothing which is mysterious, nothing which cannot be readily explained. Every advance in such instruction served only to make the matter worse. The pious members, so continually defeated in the conflict with untoward habits and associations, are still ignorant of the operation of the causes we have mentioned. They look upon the difficulty as one of those developments of a fallen nature which, in the present evil world, will remain without a remedy. But let them at length make the discovery which is here set forth, and relief will be in their power.

V.

CHOIR-SINGING MADE RESPECTABLE.

"Deliberate with caution, but act with decision; and yield with graciousness, or oppose with firmness."—COLTON.

REV. MR. R—— pursued his theological course under very favorable musical influences. He had a good ear for music. His voice was pleasant and commanding. His class enjoyed the advantage of musical lectures, and an hour every week for special practice. By these means, he gained just that amount of information and skill, which would enable him, wherever he might be settled, to secure good devotional singing among his people. Soon after his licensure, he took charge of a wealthy congregation in one of the Eastern States.

The people were pleased with their pastor. They admired his talents, revered his piety, and confided in his discretion. Their esteem was not misplaced, for he was no ordinary man. He loved his people; and in the main was pleased with their views and arrangements. The music at church, however, was miserably poor. At the same time, he noticed a great fondness for instrumental music among the people; and very naturally connected the two circumstances together, as if the one had been occasioned by the other. Just such results had often occurred. But he soon discovered that in some families there was an equal fondness for *vocal* music, as was manifest by occa-

sional performances in the parlor. Parlor music, too, was usually well chosen. The singing and accompaniment evinced much skill and refinement. There was also a general conviction among the people that the psalmody was deficient. But how was this to be remedied? Every effort had failed. Good singers would not unite with the choir, and poor ones would not profit by instruction. There was therefore no improvement.

The pastor attended the rehearsals of the choir, and readily discovered the causes of the difficulty. The choir had not been sustained by people of influence, and religious obligations had not been duly considered.

The pastor, taking all the circumstances into view, saw what ought to be done. He determined if practicable to obtain a good church-organ; and then bring into use the vocal talent of the parish, on Christian grounds. This plan would best accord with the musical habits and notions of the place, and be the more likely to ensure permanent success. The people readily subscribed for the instrument, and while it was being built, a small class of young ladies took lessons in thorough-bass, and sought to acquire the appropriate touch and management which would be needed. Just as the builder had completed his work and brought it to hand, the Sabbath drew on. Then was the pastor's time, while all was expectation, to spread before his people the solemn teachings of the Bible in reference to the manner and spirit of praise. It was a Sabbath well spent. The appeal was not in vain. There was resting upon the minds of all a new conviction of responsibility. There was doubtless sufficient talent in the place, and why should it not be put in requisition? It was due to themselves as a people. It was due to the interests of the church, and especially was it due to the great Object of religious homage. This could not be denied. Many of his people, too, had *special* talent. "The pos-

session of this, imposes corresponding obligation." Those who could sing so sweetly with an accompaniment in the drawing-room, could easily render efficient service in the church, by uniting their voices with the organ.

Such was the substance of his commencing appeal. He did not exhaust the subject. He did not use up at once his entire stock of materials, as many might have done. He knew that his people would yet require "line upon line and precept upon precept." This would be as necessary in regard to praise as in reference to prayer. Yet there was no deficiency in his first appeal. This was followed by individual conversations, which were attended with the most pleasing success.

One day, after listening to a delightful strain of parlor music, he familiarly addressed the young lady who had been entertaining him,—“Now, Mary, we need just such a singer as you are to be a leading member of the choir we are about remodelling.”

“O, Mr. R——, you would make me so conspicuous!”

“Indeed! How many of the congregation do you suppose would notice you particularly in so large a choir?”

“Why, more than fifty.”

“And yet the other evening, as I am told, you sung alone very obligingly and very sweetly to a much larger number.”

“But—custom, you know, sir—”

“Is sometimes wrong, and when it is so, we must endeavor to rectify it. If it were customary for young ladies to absent themselves from the Sabbath-school, you would not hesitate about the matter—you would be just the more punctual in attendance.”

“Yes, I can say *that*.”

“It is customary here, I am sorry to say, for young people of talent, piety, and influence, to neglect the praises of God. Is this a right custom?”

"You tell us that it is not."

"There is no Bible precept that literally commands you to Sunday-school labors; but every one that breathes is bound to offer praise. The possession of talent, you know, enhances obligation."

"I suppose our singing ought to be better."

"Is it not a *sin* to treat it with such neglect?"

"There is something wrong about it; but—"

"Just pause a moment, my young friend. The wrong has been too long tolerated. It must be done away. You profess to have piety—you have talent, and you have influence. But—what will you do?"

"Mr. R——, you are *hard* upon me."

"How so? I desire only to be faithful."

"You do not mean to say, that I am bound to become a *public singer*?"

"Not professionally."

"But you would have me sing in public?"

"Not for display or amusement, but for solemn worship."

"And you think I am called to make such a *sacrifice* of feeling?"

"Rather say, to enjoy a precious privilege."

"I do not see what it would avail."

"You have some firmness. You have stability. Your example would influence others who have less decision."

"But, Mr. R——, it would be considered *so* ungentle!"

"Mary!"—said he, in a mingled tone of kindness and disapprobation.

"Pardon me. I was wrong. But—"

"Yet you hesitate."

"The choir, you know, are such miserable singers."

"Therefore, we wish for better ones."

"They are persons with whom I do not associate."

"You meet them in the lecture-room; you associate with them in the Sunday-school; and with many of them you are most affectionately united at the communion-table. Cannot you unite with them in praise?"

"But who will play the organ, and who will lead us?"

"Leave that to me. I will arrange it."

"I should hate to go, and then fail."

"To fail in a good cause through the fault of others, is no disgrace."

"Mr. R——, you have conquered me. I will go."

"Right. That is well spoken. I like decision. Now I shall be able to persuade Miss B——, Miss C——, and Miss D——, and other of your associates to join you; and if it is not customary for respectable people to lead in the public praises of God, we will make it so; and that will be establishing a good custom in place of a bad one."

After the full consent of Miss M——, the pastor had no further difficulty as to numbers. The choir-seats were ample and pleasant. One of the best of the thorough-bass pupils took her station at the instrument; and a pious young man who had gained some standing in the community consented to act as chorister. At the first meeting, the singers sat promiscuously, and the jargon was intolerable. But there was an obvious remedy. Those who had been accustomed to sing with instruments were seated in the most commanding places. This gave satisfaction, and the arrangement became permanent. A few rehearsals, conducted with religious order, prepared the choir, the organist, and the chorister, for the exercises of the Sabbath. The effort succeeded. The playing was chaste and simple. The singing was harmonious. The words of the hymns were well uttered, and their solemn import was deeply realized by the

choir and congregation, Old tunes were not wholly discarded. Once or twice on every Sabbath, the congregation united their voices with the choir. The performances, then, would be sufficiently rude; but by frequent repetition of effort, the style began visibly to improve. Most of the choir would also be at the weekly lectures; and sitting together on the same level with others, sought indirectly to promote congregational singing. The kindest sympathies were thus forming between the several classes of worshippers.

What could have been more delightful? All were pleased. All were benefited. The pastor was comforted in his labors. The Sabbath exercises were continually increasing in interest. The effect was highly devotional. The young ladies forgot all conspicuity, in the richness of Christian enjoyment, and expressed their gratitude to their pastor for providing them with so rich a privilege. Nothing could tempt them now to desert the choir. All regarded the service as Christians ought to do, and no doubt, gained acceptance before the Master of Assemblies, as humble, devout worshippers.

Having made so favorable a beginning, the arrangement could easily be sustained from year to year. Christian principle and Christian enjoyment would keep everything harmonious. One thing however, remained to be done, and the pastor for a time had kept it in reserve. After the people had learned to enjoy as a devotional exercise, the singing at church, he made a special appeal to them in behalf of the practice of singing at family worship. Bible precepts and examples were quoted, and historic records of by-gone days were not referred to in vain. The duty was too important to be neglected, the privilege too precious to be abused or disregarded. Many of the people complied with the advice of their pastor, and succeeded beyond their hopes in reaping its advantages. This naturally

led to the instruction of their children in psalmody, which ultimately became a matter of great interest and importance through the place.

But now, since the pastor's efforts had been crowned with success, and his most sanguine anticipations had been realised, what was more natural than that he should for a season commit this interest into other hands? It had occupied much of his time, till other interests were beginning to suffer. The music was now sufficiently skilful and appropriate to be in keeping with other exercises. Greater refinement was not particularly necessary. Exercises in praise were well ordered. The choir were well united. No serious difficulty had ever occurred to mar the enjoyment; and now the pastor signified his intention of confiding, for a time, the rehearsals and performances of the choir chiefly to the management of the leading singers.

This was hardly judicious. Such interests require the eye of Christian vigilance. The adversary of souls, who could make no headway against such faithful and such well-denied efforts, had doubtless been watching for some parenthesis in the pastor's exertions, as the most favorable time for him to begin his pernicious work. He commenced adroitly. The music was fine, and the people began to praise it. It was admired by many in the neighboring parishes. It attracted the attention of strangers. It was so appropriate, so skilful, so well ordered, and so impressive. In most respects it was a model for other congregations. One thing only, seemed to be wanting. At a time when music was making such progress in refinement, the standard of artistic excellence should be more elevated. The organ should be more skilfully played. Such a noble instrument was susceptible of higher influences. The young ladies had done themselves great credit as amateur performers, but, as they made no pretensions to superior skill in execution, they

would now retire with credit, and would gladly be released from responsibility. Mr. Flourish, and Mr. Superficial were coming to reside in the parish, either of whom would consent to play for a small salary. The sum could easily be raised, and afterwards enlarged, as talent would be better appreciated. All this seemed so plausible, that no objections were offered. The population, for the year or two preceding, had greatly changed. Many "new-comers" found their way into the choir, who thought more of taste than of devotion. Others, by neglect of watchfulness were losing their spirituality, and relapsing unconsciously into their former habits. Some feelings of jealousy began to arise, and some uneasiness in regard to seats.

It was a time of danger. A new organist, with secular preferences, and ambitious views, would sooner or later occasion dissatisfaction. The people, through their love for instrumental music might be gradually misled, till the executant would have them in his power. Such a game as this had been too often witnessed in the neighboring parishes. The pastor took the alarm. A man of less information, less discernment, and less firmness of principle, would now have retired in discouragement, and there would have been an end to all substantial improvement. A secular taste would soon have predominated. Bad management would have ensued. The spirit of praise would have given place to unhallowed feelings and irrelevant purposes, and a sad chapter of accidents would have disturbed the quiet and marred the enjoyment of the worshippers. Right principles and right motives are as essential in praise as in prayer.

The pastor saw that he had erred in leaving the music to the guidance of inexperienced hands. A part of the mischief was already accomplished. The remainder must be prevented. The two players were in a few days to have an opportunity for

the trial of their skill. This could not well be prevented. The people were not unreasonable in wishing the organ to be better played, and their wishes must not be frustrated by any direct interference. But, happily, he knew of a kind-hearted Christian organist in a neighboring town, who was just out of place, and who would be glad of another engagement. His people knew nothing of the circumstance. So, on the following Sabbath, he "posted up" his hearers, on the importance of securing right influences, and maintaining just practical distinctions, in exercises of praise. This done, he awaited with some anxiety the result of the ensuing trial of skill. The evening came, the house was crowded, and the pastor was early in attendance. Mr. Superficial took his seat, and poured forth a noisy and rapid voluntary, which drew the people upon their feet, with hands uplifted, mouths open, and eyes that spoke incommunicable things.

"Where did you obtain that fine piece?" said the pastor.

"I found it," said the player hesitatingly, for he feared the prejudices of the people, "I found it in a composition of Haydn's."

"That is quite artistic. Where can it be obtained?"

"At Messrs. B.'s, sir."

"What shall I ask for?"

"The Devil on Two Sticks," said he, softly, with the hope that the people would not understand him.

"The Devil on Two Sticks!" responded the pastor. "It is an opera, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, the overture."

The organist blushed, and the people dropped their heads. So the eventful inquiry was pressed no further.

"I should like to put those two sticks in the stove," said the sexton, as he replenished the fire near the vestibule.

"I don't believe the devil has anything to do with lumber," said an honest carpenter.

The pastor "bit his lips," in silence. A psalm was next taken up by the choir, when the accompanist poured forth such a perfect deluge of sound, as convinced every one of his deficiency in judgment.

Mr. Flourish took his seat. He determined not to select anything from the opera. He imagined that sacred music would be more popular. So, with all the stops of the instrument drawn out, he played for a voluntary, in a rapid though clumsy manner, one of the most popular of Mozart's choruses.

"A fine piece of music," said the pastor.

"It is by the great Mozart, sir."

"From his twelfth mass, I presume."

"Yes, sir, from his 'Gloria in Excelsis.'"

"Those words—'Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will to men,' form indeed a noble theme!"

The people were confounded. The pastor had lately preached from that text, a lovely gospel sermon, all unlike the hurry and clamor of such loud instrumentation. The music, though masterly, seemed boisterous rather than devotional. The player next requested the choir and congregation to sing "Old Hundred." Here was some evidence of good taste. But when the singers were "well under way," he began to show off his wonderful skill in variations, such as are sometimes heard in the churches of Germany. He grew faster and faster, and took such untold liberties with that simple tune, that no one could follow him or understand his object. The people shook their heads in disapprobation.

"Rightly named 'Mr. Flourish!'" said one in a whisper.

"Does he call that 'Old Hundred?'" said Deacon Staidman.

"He might as well have given us 'Yankee Doodle!'"

The people all grew weary, and wondered why the pastor had such a patient, satisfied look. The truth was, the two candidates had "used themselves up," and would now be out of his way. It mattered little to him what became of the rest of the evening. His people were receiving a good lesson. The ensuing Sabbath saw his favorite candidate at the organ. He was a man of good sense as well as of practical skill. All were pleased with him. His services were secured. Through the divine blessing upon his efforts, in connection with those of the pastor and the chorister, the former happy influences were soon restored. Thenceforward, the pastor and the church sympathized more strongly with those who were sustaining the exercises of praise, and were never afterwards known to leave them entirely to their own direction.

VI.

MERE SKILL UNSUCCESSFUL.

“Know then thyself, thy evil as well as thy good—flattery shall not harm thee.”

TUPPER.

“WHY is it,” said one of the singers to another, while passing out of the brick church of the pleasant parish of F——, “why is it that professors of religion care so little for sacred music?”

“Really, I cannot tell.”

“Persons who pretend to be religious, *ought* to care for it.”

“Certainly.”

“Yet nothing we sing seems to move them.”

“If we sung in such a sleepy, dull manner as many choirs do, the people would have some excuse.”

“But our singing is excellent.”

“The people *know* that it is good.”

“Then why don't they *feel its power*?”

“The truth is, they have no taste.”

“But taste is a faculty which depends on practice and observation. They ought to *acquire* taste.”

“Make them believe that, if you can.”

“They will have their own way of thinking.”

“They are very inexcusable, *I* think.”

“Can they be true Christians?”

"The same question has sometimes occurred to me."

"It is very strange that we, who do not pretend to be religious, should have to do all the singing."

"And that others should seldom commend or encourage us. I wonder whether they would miss us, if we were to abandon our seats."

The two individuals expressed the feeling which prevailed among their associates. There was some ground for dissatisfaction. The church were too indifferent to the singing. This general deficiency, however, was the natural result of a want of just information. They knew too little of the whole subject, rightly to estimate their duty respecting it, or to appreciate the loss of privilege they were actually sustaining. They had been led to entertain notions which were fundamentally erroneous.

But the complainants were equally in the wrong. They were would-be amateurs. They sung for pleasure; and psalmody supplied the means of gratification. Yet they were deficient in self-knowledge. They were endeavoring to perform "an important duty," and one which "professors of religion" were "treating with inexcusable neglect." They were giving a lesson to Christians which ought to have influence upon them. Yet they seemed to be laboring in vain. The pastor, to lessen the dissatisfaction, would sometimes express his obligations to the singers, in a manner which was no disparagement to their self-esteem. For he too had wrong notions of the subject; and evidently anticipated but little result from the customary offerings of praise.

The singing, artistically considered, was excellent. Its style was remarkable for energy and promptness. The adaptation was skilful, and the utterance was "effective." Much attention was paid to dynamic distinctions. Emotion also was occasion-

ally manifest. Yet the influences were of an imaginative character, which

“ Play round the head, but come not near the heart.”

This choir had been instructed from time to time by a vocalist, who was a companionable fellow, fond of good society, and pleasing in his address. As he visited among the people, he would reward their hospitality with humorous anecdotes and comic songs. He abhorred vice, respected religion, and was an advocate of “sound principles.” But he was a man of the world. His pupils were quite taken by his playful humor, and would sometimes tempt him to the indulgence of it in school-hours. The dignity of church-music was thus lowered in their estimation ; and all ideas of its solemnity were banished from their minds.

We need not wonder that singing-schools thus conducted were found to have an unfavorable tendency ; or that their influence was dreaded by the church and pastor. The wonder is, that the latter did not endeavor to improve their character. They pursued, it seems, the opposite course, leaving the singers wholly to themselves. Lukewarm professors were more attentive. Many of them were wont to rehearse in their families the merry pranks they used to play at singing-schools. Their children, greatly amused, would become emulous of similar achievements ; and the teacher, good-natured soul, would often pretend not to see their comicalities, lest the hand of discipline should spoil the enjoyment. In other respects, his schools were orderly. The pupils made substantial improvement ; but they were never remarkable for gravity of deportment.

The result of such training might have been foreseen. The mind was irresistibly led by it to entertain low ideas of responsibility. Formality in praise became habitual ; and religious

obligations in this connection, never being inculcated, would of course be kept out of mind.

But we must look more deeply into the nature of the case before us. There was, underlying this entire system of management, a great fundamental error in theory. The singers were full believers in musical efficiency. "There must be something divine in the art itself," they said, "or it would never be reckoned as an important part of devotion." This, at that time, was the popular idea. Its absurdity might easily have been shown; for if we were to adopt it as a sound principle, the inference would inevitably follow, that men destitute of religion may be regarded as real worshippers. But, as the people made no pretensions to musical knowledge, the monstrous heresy escaped their notice. The singers supposed, that if the music was artistically sustained, it would work out its own religious results. The music, therefore, was the chief object of attention. It was treated just as if it had some inherent virtue, which must be "brought out by skilful" appliances. This was the very idea which the teacher inculcated, and neither the choir, the people, nor the pastor thought of questioning its soundness. It was natural, therefore, that great stress should be laid on the possession of talent; and as little of this was found in the bosom of the church, recourse was had to the congregation.

The choir had no objections to this responsibility. They thought it in some sense meritorious. Though not Christians at heart, they were "doing a noble service, which ought to call forth the gratitude of the church;" and the cold indifference with which their efforts were rewarded, was a constant source of dissatisfaction.

But the question might well have been asked, whether the fancied virtue of the music was really eliminated? Neither

the church nor the congregation were sensible of its presence. They felt nothing of its power. The singing gave a fair exhibition of talent. It was skilful. It was lively and bold. Yet it wanted solemnity. It failed to touch the springs of pious susceptibility. This filled the listeners with doubt. Was it not possible, after all, that the influence of music had been overrated? There might be more poetry than truth in the pretensions of the art. At least it required powers of discernment in the listener, which few were found to possess, before its boasted effects could be realized. As this special appreciation had always been wanting, the people were persuaded that church music could not be very serviceable to them. As individuals, each one felt excused in neglecting it. The pastor was "no lover of music;" "all tunes were alike to him." "Nothing," he would say, "is perfect in this world." The singing is thought to be good. Music is a difficult art. For all that had been gained, he said, the choir had laid the society under great obligations. Few persons could excel in music. He was not among the favored ones, and could spend his time more usefully than to attend the schools. The choir were not satisfied with this apology for neglect, for they knew how much could be achieved by cultivation. But as he had put such a plaster upon their consciences, they managed to retain their self-esteem, and continued from year to year their offerings of lip-service, as useful to the pastor and the church, and not displeasing they imagined, to the Master of Assemblies.

The case we have here presented is one which not unfrequently occurs at the present day. The worship is conducted confessedly on the principle of musical efficiency. No wonder it fails. It is heartless. The music is often ill-conceived, and destitute of right expression. This is manifest by the very instinctive tones of emotion. One who has a discriminating

ear, will easily recognize in such performances the emphasis of boasting, irony, vexation, &c., where those of a tender, subdued character are demanded; and their effect, even where the discovery is not made, has a deadening influence upon devotion. It affords at best a gratification of taste, which is found to be a miserable substitute for spirituality.

The position thus taken, as we have seen, is an erroneous one. It will not bear examination. Music, as an art, has no such inherent efficiency, as many will pretend. Its moral effects, like those of oratory, depend more upon the purposes and intentions of the artist, than upon the nicer appliances of skill. The latter should not be under-valued or neglected. But they will never do the office-work of the blessed Sanctifier. The supposition would be impious as false.

It should be remembered, too, that musical talent is never acquired without practice. Let Christians take in hand the work of cultivation, and in a little time there will be no lack of talent among their numbers. Let schools and rehearsals be rightly conducted, and their influence need no longer be feared.

VII.

WANT OF CO-OPERATION.

“Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we all might win,
By fearing to attempt.”—SHAKESPEARE.

THE good people of the parish of E——, entertained notions of musical efficiency which were vague and fallacious. They imagined that nature was very sparing in dispensing her musical gifts, especially in that place. No individual among them had ever attained to eminence in the art. Few among professors of religion had gained sufficient knowledge to enable them to “start the tune,” in social meetings. That task usually devolved on a venerable deacon, whose voice had gone to decay, and whose memory through age, had become so treacherous, as to mingle the strains of different tunes in the same stanza. He would run from Mear to Dundee, and from Dundee to Wantage, without any suspicion of mistake. But the brethren were so accustomed to his manner, as to follow him with little difficulty. At church, however, there was a different arrangement. The interest had long been confided to individuals who, though religiously educated, had made no pretensions to personal piety. The church might at first have lamented the imagined necessity of such a measure; for after all their ideas of musical potency, and of native deficiency, they must have thought it singular

that none of the friends of God were to become active in the public celebration of his praise. Yet, as nothing better seemed to offer, they became accustomed to the arrangement, and regarded it as a matter of course.

The choir, consisting chiefly of young persons, maintained for awhile great regularity of deportment, and made creditable proficiency in skill. At length they became ambitious to excel, and soon embraced here and there among their numbers an individual who, as Gregory the Great would have said, "was more distinguished for his voice than for his precepts or his morals." The practice was winked at for a season, because it made "a wonderful difference in the music." But its disastrous tendencies soon became manifest in the altered deportment of the choir. The change attracted the notice of the congregation, and became the subject of remark. But as the music was admired, the singers began to feel their independence. Matters grew worse. Some of the more conscientious members left their seats, while those who were less scrupulous had the management to themselves. They heard of the dissatisfaction, but gave it no heed. The people had better be attending to their own devotions, they said, than to be watching for sins in the gallery. The choir were "under no obligations to them." If the people chose to be dissatisfied, they might come up and sustain the music in their own way.

The people were in a dilemma. What was to be done? It would not answer to displease the singers, much less to disband them, for individuals could not be found to supply their place. The singing would be ruined by the adoption of any decisive measure. Nothing remained, therefore, but patient endurance. There were indeed no decisive outbreaks of immorality to be seen. But there was just that aspect of thoughtlessness and inattention to the exercises of devotion, and that look of play-

fulness and irreverence which were unbecoming in the house of God, especially in the persons of those who were to lead in the exercises of praise. Probably, too, there was more behind the curtain which did not meet the public eye.

But in the midst of this disquietude, the chorister removed to a neighboring village. And now, an individual in the church, a person of great worth, had been sufficiently qualified to assume the direction. The new incumbent was a man of sound sense, quick discernment, patient temper, and pleasing address. A salary was no object to him, and though his musical acquirements were rather limited, he was not deficient in taste, or in his knowledge of adaptation. The reasons for his election were no secret, and the singers felt that their rights were invaded. They respected the man for his position in society, and his conciliatory manners. They might even have been flattered by the condescensions of such a man. But he had come to "*abridge their liberties.*" He would watch their deportment, check their improprieties, restrain their whisperings and scribblings, and detect their secret mischiefs. He had taken the situation for this very purpose, and the congregation would carry their point, unless he could be induced to resign. It would not answer to commence open warfare. But while they treated him with seeming respect, they were careful to let him feel in some measure his musical deficiencies. This would be trying to any man of delicacy. He felt it keenly, and it augmented his embarrassment. His talents would have well sustained him if he had been rightly treated, and even as it was, they were fast improving. But the singers caught at every mistake, magnified his deficiencies, and made up their minds that he would soon become disheartened. But they mistook their man. He was not wanting in courage or assiduity. He understood them from the first moment of their opposition. He saw their duplicity,

and knew of their secret insinuations against him among the people. Yet he determined for the present to bear all, and keep his own counsel till a more suitable time for action. They said he was a good man, but a poor chorister. What a pity he had not more talent ! He was so very moderate in his movements. He had not sufficient self-possession or firmness of nerve. Then he was severe in reference to their deportment. They did not need to be treated like children, who could not be left to their own guidance. They were capable of self-direction.

All this was known to him, but he kept his secret so well that they felt perfectly secure. They increased their duplicity ; became more orderly and polite and attentive. Meanwhile, their whisperings of dissatisfaction increased for months, and spread wide among the congregation. It was now time for a disclosure.

One evening, at a rehearsal, when the singers appeared uncommonly kind and respectful, he began in a dignified but quiet manner to lift the veil, that they might discover how perfectly he understood them. His manner was gentle. He told all. But, while he kept nothing back, he uttered not a reproachful word. He even apologized for their ill-treatment as far as truth would allow. He spoke with entire self-command ; showed no disposition to wound their feelings ; and even mentioned circumstances of extenuation, with a spirit of meekness and magnanimity which they never could have anticipated. They were confounded. They looked guilty and ashamed. Their own conduct stared them in the face. They had never before regarded it in such a disadvantageous point of light. Very little could be said in reply. But their speaking countenances betokened regret ; and he frankly forgave them the injury they had inflicted upon him. This, in their circumstances, was a sensible relief. He closed the evening with a fervent, af-

fectionate prayer ; and for a few weeks, there was no farther disquietude. The singers were temporarily subdued, and the music improved more visibly.

Then was the time for the pastor and people to strengthen the hands of the chorister. They should have attended the rehearsals and shown a kind interest in the performances. The influence would have been salutary. Just that kind of encouragement was wanting, to give permanence to the existing impressions. A multitude of examples were cited, to show the importance of the proposed movement ; but to no purpose. The pastor thought himself too ignorant of that subject to render any effectual assistance ; and leading members of the church could not think of forming new musical habits. No one would comply with his wishes, and he must be left to stand the conflict alone. Had the case been otherwise, an entire and permanent victory would doubtless then have been achieved ; for a partial conviction of a salutary nature was resting upon the minds of the singers, which might, by the blessing of God, have been easily deepened and perpetuated.

But, at length, since the known wishes of the chorister were not seconded in this matter, the singers began to imagine that their former insinuations had taken effect, and that if the chorister could not succeed in obtaining the countenance and co-operation of the church, he must be gradually losing his influence. Time had now cast a shadow of alleviation over their late delinquency ; and self-esteem was fast healing the wounds of conscience. Another effort of the choir, better directed, would probably be crowned with success.

A few of the leading singers held a private consultation. Their plan must be secret. One thing they could easily do, and keep their own counsel. They could, by negligence of execution, soon cause the singing to decline ; and this would seem

to prove that their former insinuations of incompetency in the leader had been well founded. This device was mean-spirited and cruel. But to the depraved heart of man, self-justification and freedom from religious restraint are no trifling considerations. Only a few of the singers were in the secret. Yet, at the very next rehearsal, the movement was sufficiently manifest to the penetrating eye of the chorister.

Again he appealed to the pastor and brethren for help. Now was the only time. What he required would doubtless ensure success. Everything as yet was favorable; but all would be hazarded by delay. The appeal was useless. Importunity was in vain. "When I was a student in divinity," said the pastor, "my venerable preceptor enjoined it upon me, as I regarded my usefulness among the people of my charge, to have nothing to do with the singing; and, knowing as little as I do about the subject, I have thought it best to act upon this advice." "Singing is very liable to make trouble. Perhaps it is well for me and for the people, that my taste is not very refined." The brethren respected the views of their pastor. They also were not singers. They could be of no service, if they were to attend the rehearsals. It would be dull business for them to sit and listen to an evening's drill. They would take no interest in it, if they were to go. They were sorry for the trouble which had occurred; and sympathized with him in his perplexities. He must be "a man of wonderful patience," or he "would long ago have yielded to discouragement." He was engaged in a "hard conflict," and in the end would "probably be defeated." Perhaps, if things continued as they were, it might on the whole be advisable for him to resign. The singers had "received a good lesson;" and "if now left to themselves, they would conduct with more propriety."

Thus deserted in every exigency, and when a little assistance

would have insured success, he saw that it would be useless to persevere. His purpose was fixed. He would wait a little season, till matters should become ripe for another disclosure ; and then, at the close of another ingenuous, kind-hearted appeal, notify the choir of his purpose of leaving them. The music continued rapidly to decline ; and as the choir seemed to regret the circumstance, the congregation had no suspicion of the real cause. Many of the singers were not in the secret. *Their* regret was sincere, and the people naturally sympathized with them.

At length, on a favorable evening, when the rehearsal from some cause had been uncommonly pleasant, he again signified to the singers, that he had perfectly understood their late movement from the very evening of its commencement. "The greater part of you," said he, "knew nothing of it. Your co-operation was not needed. A few determined spirits who had leading voices, could easily cause the performances to deteriorate without any very apparent design." That there had been such a conspiracy among them he was fully prepared to show. The guilty ones quailed before his penetrating eye. Their entire mischief stood revealed. Others, too, he said, must have made a similar discovery, and been willing to favor the design. Again he saw the rising blushes around him. Yet his entire manner was calm, dignified, and conciliatory. He employed no harsh epithets. He indulged in no innuendos or personalities. If the guilty ones stood revealed, it was through their own confusion of deportment. He indulged in no feelings of bitterness. So far as himself was concerned, he could freely forgive the injury which had been inflicted. They well knew that he had deserved no such treatment from them, and that their entire course had been wrong. They were perfectly aware that the singing might have been well sustained. If some of

their number had intentionally injured the performances and others had sided with them, they must bear the blame. He had no wish to reproach them. He could bear such treatment. Comparatively speaking, it was not worthy of being named—but they had offended against the majesty of heaven, and he trembled for them, in view of a coming tribunal. He should now leave them to their own direction—but from his inmost soul he pitied their blindness to the solemn responsibilities which were resting upon them. He was in earnest. They saw the tear of compassion standing in his eye, when he besought them as they regarded their eternal interests, to look well to the solemnity of their position.

There was weeping among the singers on that occasion. Tears of mingled vexation and ingenuous regret were seen on many a cheek. Even then, had the chorister been sustained by the aid which had been so unsuccessfully solicited, the choir would have been permanently reclaimed. The kindness and magnanimity they had so emphatically abused would easily have subdued their opposition. Already the work had been nearly accomplished single handed. But there was no prospect of help. The idea that “singers are always unmanageable,” was too firmly fixed in the public mind for any change of policy.

The singers took quiet possession of the field. For awhile they were grave and regular in their deportment. They had disgraced themselves, and were heartily ashamed of the course which had been pursued. But time is a wonderful healer. It was not long before self-justification began to rally. They had “intended no real harm.” They had struggled only to regain their former independence—and in this, after all, they “must have managed with a good deal of adroitness.” The people were evidently in their favor, and would offer no further interference. Years passed on with little variety of incident. An

outward reform had been established—but the songs of Zion, so far, at least, as the choir were concerned, continued to be an empty sound, and an unmeaning ceremony.

How evident it is from the preceding sketch, that the praises of the sanctuary need the active encouragement and co-operation of the church and pastor! If talent and taste are wanting for such a purpose, it should be remembered that even *this* deficiency may be supplied by a little care and industry. For all the purposes here required, the gifts of Nature have been sufficiently bountiful. Nor is it true that “singers will be always unmanageable.” Let them be rightly trained in spirit, as well as in manner, and the force of that proverb will soon be done away.

VIII.

CULTURE AND COMMON SENSE.

“Occasion tells him what to do.”

NEW towns in some of the Western States have sprung up with a rapidity almost magical. Such at least is the impression they make upon the occasional visitor. Amid the foot-prints of a lone wilderness, you discover perhaps a few rude hamlets on either side of some noble stream, bridged by huge unhewn timbers and loose planks ; but soon you behold there a place of commerce, of industry, of learning and refinement, till it becomes one of the most important locations in the surrounding territory. Religious institutions will sometimes keep pace with the teeming population.

The town of F——, was one of those favored places. A church was easily formed, and placed under the care of a faithful pastor. He laid a good foundation for his successors to build upon, and was called into another field. The congregation had greatly prospered under his ministry, and the town had acquired a dense population. The second pastor was equally faithful, and a man of greater learning and refinement. Though fond of music, he was an indifferent singer. He knew little of the rules of the art, and still less of the unfortunate maxims respecting it which have operated so perniciously upon

the public mind. He thought for himself, and with the Bible open before him, he discovered that the office of praise was not well sustained. Something therefore was to be done. The idea that this was no concern of his never occurred to him. His mind was unsophisticated. Preaching, exhortation, prayer and praise, all religious exercises established by the same authority, lie equally under the eye of the spiritual watchman; and why should he treat any one of them with disregard? Still, he would not act precipitately. "Taste," he said, "is not a plant of rapid growth. Even ill-habits may be too suddenly invaded. The people need information."

He procured with difficulty a skilful teacher; and found no obstacle in the way of establishing a school. Few teachers at that time were distinguished for skill, and the numbers were still smaller who gave decided evidence of piety. The individual now employed, though not a professor of religion, was a man of tried morals. He was decidedly conscientious. True, he was an artist; and music, as one of the arts, might be taught like painting and sculpture, irrespective of moral or religious considerations. But the demands of psalmody are peculiar. "Words of the most solemn nature are to be taken in hand," said the pastor, "and we must treat them with becoming reverence." "It is not enough merely to acquire a knowledge of music; we must cultivate the true spirit of praise." The teacher saw at a glance the importance of this distinction. He felt embarrassed. The pastor was right; but what was to be done? What could an unconverted man do towards promoting a heart-felt spirit of praise?

A German pantheist would have readily excused himself from such responsibilities. "God is in art," he would say, "and he who successfully devotes himself to art, must of necessity be a true worshipper." But the teacher had never imag-

ined such a species of *idolatry*. His mind had never been misled by "philosophy falsely so called." He was troubled. He *ought* to have been troubled. Yet he saw certain things which appeared practicable. His own deportment would be uniformly grave. He would preserve the strictest order among his pupils. Sacred subjects would always be treated with reverence. Exercises in vocal delivery would generally be founded in unimportant or hackneyed stanzas; and where stanzas of a more solemn nature were to be taken in hand, he would be careful not to load them with artistic associations. Here was an essential point gained.

Some teachers would here have accused him of needless scrupulosity. But he was too well educated not to understand the important bearings of such a course. Right mental associations are important in every department of music; and more especially so where moral and religious interests are involved.

The school greatly prospered. It was soon joined by several professors of religion, while others became frequent visitors. The exercises of the evening were often opened or closed with prayer. Still the training was incomplete. Another element was wanting. Many observed such an improvement in the manner of teaching as to be greatly pleased. They saw not that anything further could be needed. Even the pastor seemed satisfied. Not so the teacher. He saw distinctly that if singers are to become actual worshippers at church, they must learn at school how to fix their minds unwaveringly upon divine things. This principle, so commonly overlooked by the best of men, stood out before *him* in strong relief, as an inevitable inference from the premises which the pastor had supplied. But he was in a dilemma. To speak of the principle without reducing it to practice, would be merely to advertise his own deficiencies. Yet, to pretend even in song to be a personal

worshipper, would be inconsistent for an unconverted man. It would be mere hypocrisy. He could not think of it for a moment.

The pastor while visiting the school, would sometimes speak of the *spirit* of praise. He would kindly caution the pupils against the usual practice of singing sacred words in an unmeaning manner. The Master of Assemblies would never accept of lip-service. It would be offensive to him. "How, for example," said he, "can singers in the practice-room use such words as those of the hundred and third Psalm, and put forth no real expressions of a grateful heart." In his last remark he was a little too fast, for practice and criticism are sometimes necessary in connection with such words, and the mind cannot attend profitably to drilling and devotion at the same moment. This, through the respectful suggestion of the teacher, he readily perceived, though some good men are found to make it a stumbling-block through life. This is always unfortunate, for when singers are exhorted to perform impracticabilities, they are strongly tempted to neglect duties that are practicable.

But again, it occurred to the pastor that there might be occasional exercises of praise in the school. Why should not real praise be offered there as well as earnest prayer? The suggestion was a sensible relief to the teacher, for it would virtually supply what was yet wanting in his own course of instructions. The pastor did not fully apprehend the importance of the measure proposed. Nor did it cost him much time or effort. Occasionally dropping in while on his way to some appointment, he would request before leaving, that a particular hymn might be sung, some of the lines of which, he would recite in a tone of devotional feeling which told volumes on the solemnity of sacred praise. There was *then* no drilling, because the mind was understood to assume the devotional attitude.

The brief exercise was often attended with deep solemnity. Those were golden moments. They were full of instruction. They were of great use to the pupils, and to the anxious teacher. The pastor enjoyed them. They refreshed his spirit, and better fitted him for the subsequent labors of the evening. These little visits threw a flood of light upon practical distinctions which had been so long disregarded. They were just what the pupils needed to fit them for the holy solemnities of public worship. Upon many hearts they left an indelible impression, and the teacher himself in after years would refer to them as among the instrumentalities which ultimately led to his own conversion.

A pleasing work of grace ensued. Several of the pupils whose hearts were put in tune by sweeter breathings than those of human minstrelsy, took great delight in exercises of praise. The precious influence seemed to pervade the choir on the Sabbath, and reach the hearts of the congregation. It was no transient excitement, such as arises from the gratification of taste. Mere musical impressions have sometimes been mistaken for better things. But here, the great themes of salvation were rendered doubly impressive by the pleasing, heart-felt, consensaneous utterances which they thus received. The singing at church had ceased to be an unmeaning ceremony. It was not a mere preparative to devotion. It was "devotion itself," breathing from heart to heart, through the solemn assembly.

The pastor always regarded that school as greatly instrumental in the promotion of the revival. Soon after its termination, he was called to other fields of labor. The real importance of the peculiarities of that school was not understood either by pastor or people. Other counsels, therefore, have occasionally prevailed. But the influence of that school is still visible now, after the lapse of thirty years. The singing for the

most part has been impressive, and there has been a remarkable freedom from those troubles which so often arise where taste has excluded spirituality. Taste itself has not been undervalued. No limits have been assigned to the amount of skill, or to the increase of refinement. The great problem has been to secure right musical culture in connection with a right spirit. The example of successful effort was not lost upon the surrounding churches.

Here was an instructive experiment. A small measure of musical talent in the ministry turned to the best account. This was effected, not by superior wisdom or foresight, but by following plain common sense views of duty, obtained directly from the teachings of inspiration. No doubt ministerial labors are sufficiently abundant and severe. But here was an example of effort so bestowed as to prove a *mitigation* of ministerial care, and a rich solace for mental fatigue and bodily prostration. Such efforts may generally be put forth without embarrassment, and by the blessing of God they will not be in vain.

IX

A CHOIR REBUKED, OFFENDED AND RECLAIMED

"Music hath charms alone for peaceful minds."—ANON.

IN the large congregation over which the Rev. Doctor Oldman presided, the power of influence in minor things was about equally divided between pastor and people. Each of the parties was in the habit of relinquishing certain interests or privileges for the purpose of securing others which were more esteemed. The habit sometimes extended to matters of much importance. One of the things which the Doctor relinquished in this style of accommodation, was church music. He was no singer. He had no ear for music. He cared little for the art. "Music," said he, "may be useful in its place, but my people will of course never become artists. If they so manage as to satisfy themselves, my purpose will be answered."

The interests of the choir had been so long confided to the young, that the latter had come to look upon the privilege as a prescriptive right. They were wont to employ their own teacher, expecting the trustees to foot the bill. They would appoint their own chorister. Instruction, too, was often limited and superficial, confined chiefly to their own numbers, with little benefit to the people at large. This for a long time had been considered their privilege. But the tone of independence was

increasing. They knew their own power. Their services were indispensable; for no other persons had acquired any amount of musical skill. All the wants of the choir, therefore, real or imaginary, must be amply supplied. They must have an increasing variety of books, nicely bound and lettered. They must have seats, and cushions, and stands, and chairs, and curtains, and lamps, and footstools, all in the nicest order. They must be allowed to give concerts at their own convenience; and no other appointment must be suffered to conflict with theirs.

This at length began to excite feelings of dissatisfaction among the people. The singers were quite too exacting. They claimed everything. One privilege was left, that of fault-finding. The congregation could censure their prodigality in expenditures, and complain of the character of their performances. This privilege was freely exercised. The singers resented such treatment, and thus the dissatisfaction became mutual. The music, without any artistic deterioration, was gradually losing its power. The violation of social sympathies and feelings is as inconsistent with the pleasures of taste, as with the kindling of devotion. Worship had become formal. Many regretted this state of things. The deacons complained. They perceived no good effects from the singing. It was "a perfect moth" to them. The people could not listen to it with any comfort. It caused their thoughts to wander, and made them out of patience. All sympathy between the parties was at an end. The exercises were sustained by the choir for their own gratification, and endorsed by the people as a useless burden.

And what a substitute was this for united, solemn thanksgiving and praise! Who can compute the amount of injury thus inflicted upon the cause of evangelical piety in that place! The singers were not worshippers. The church were grieved. Right affections would not come at the bidding of such a choir.

Feelings of penitence, and love, and gratitude, and adoration, were rather repressed than cherished by the performances.

The pastor saw the aspect of things. He sympathized with the people, but was unwilling to oppose the singers. This was a subject with reference to which he had "assumed little responsibility." Such difficulties were apt to arise. There was a call for mutual forbearance. As music had no interest to him, he could abstract his attention from it, and feel no interruption. But in the exercises of the desk his uneasiness was often manifest. He would unconsciously read the hymn in a drawling manner, as if expecting no benefit from it—and then sit down to busy himself in correcting his MSS., or reading notices till the singing was over. In this course he felt "fully justified." Why should his attention be wasted upon that which he could neither appreciate nor enjoy?

Such a conspicuous example from the pulpit, however, would be likely to find imitators where there was not the same excuse for inattention. The singers understood this demonstration of indifference, and became in their turn inattentive to the Preacher. During the sermon and the prayers they would sometimes be whispering as others had done during the singing. They would turn over the leaves of their music-books, or be scribbling on slips of paper, as if retaliating the slight they had suffered from the desk. This was perfectly natural. It might have been expected. But it surprised the pastor. That the license might have been borrowed from his own example, was an idea which never occurred to him. It was not real praise but the abuse of it, which had rendered him inattentive; but to the mind of the singers, he had furnished a plausible pretext. "It could not be a sin to imitate their pastor!"

Another step in wickedness was not without its results. The singers began to provoke each other to the indulgence of levity

and playfulness. The thing was done in plain view of the congregation. It was too much. It was insufferable. The pastor felt that he had a duty to do. The singers were intentionally wicked. He would not stoop to converse with them in private. A public sin should be rebuked in public. He could not tamper with such ungodliness. So from the pulpit he suddenly broke forth in terms of severe and merited censure.

The singers immediately left their seats. That was a thing of course. The pastor should have expected it, though it took him rather by surprise. Certainly it was his duty to rebuke sin. He had done so with becoming boldness—and here was the result. What next? “Must the singers be urged to return to their seats?” “Not without an acknowledgment of their transgression.” No acknowledgment was offered. But there was a resource for the exigency. The old people who could once sing well, but whose voices had miserably decayed through long neglect of practice, must now take their places in the choir. The experiment, after a sufficient amount of drilling, might have easily succeeded. The necessity of such preparation did not occur to them. They went up, like Sampson of old when his locks were shorn, quite unconscious of the change which had passed upon them. Numbers were respectable; but O, what singing! Who could have believed it! They could scarcely endure their own voices. But, to see the members of the late choir, instead of hanging their heads in mortification, actually amused at the failure of the old people—to see them winking and smiling, at the expense of their betters, in presence of the assembly; this was more than could be patiently endured.

On the next Sabbath came an experiment in congregational singing. This, if the members of the former choir had fully co-operated, might for awhile have given satisfaction. The voices of the people would have been partially harmonized,

there would have been more sympathetic emotion, and more spirituality, in the exercises. But the individuals who had been publicly rebuked for their ungodliness, sat in sullen silence. They were mortified and angry, but not penitent. They were opposed to the arrangement. It greatly disturbed them. They could not foresee where it was to end, or whether they would ever be invited to resume their seats. Some grew discouraged, and absented themselves from church. Others would sit in some retired corner. All refused to sing, in the expectation that the experiment would the sooner fail.

There was more real unanimity among the people at this time, than might have been anticipated. There was no open contention. The subject was not deemed of sufficient importance to hazard the peace of society. Each party, it was true, had felt aggrieved; but, while looking for ultimate redress, nothing could be gained by causing divisions. Both parties, too, were becoming weary of the strife, and longed to see it terminated. The singing was bad. Some of the congregation who had no ear for music were satisfied with the change. Some who had neglected their privilege for years, now poured forth such noises as are not easily described. Some would seem to sing from feelings of vexation, and some in self-defence. A few happy spirits, who were destitute of susceptibility, seemed the only ones who enjoyed the singing as a religious exercise. This state of things was dreadful. It must have been dimly apprehended, or it would not for an hour have been tolerated. There was a great want of information among the people, which nothing served to supply.

After a few weeks' trial, the experiment was abandoned. Congregational singing, without instruction or practice, or efficient aid from an instrument, from a select quartet or a voluntary choir, would scarcely be tolerable at the outset, while it

would soon be found to depreciate to the lowest possible level. Before it had thus far declined in the present instance, a consultation was held. Matters had been carried too far. Measures had been hasty and premature. To some extent, there had been blame on both sides. The young people were "ashamed of their former wickedness." They had had time for reflection, and would improve in their behavior. They must be persuaded to resume their seats. A committee of influential men, who had stood aloof from the difficulties, consented to act as mediators. How much they blamed or flattered the singers, or censured or justified the proceedings which had offended them, was not exactly known. The important mission was soon accomplished, and the young people were restored to their former standing and influence. Though at last victorious in the conflict, the struggle had been long and unpleasant. They had suffered for their folly, and had deserved to suffer. Now they determined to act with more consideration. The people also had taken an impressive lesson. They would now be more liberal and less censorious. Though they had formerly been but little benefited by the performances of the choir, they had seen the disadvantage of grumbling, and were willing for awhile to forbear. For a few weeks, everything was quiet and in a measure satisfactory. The singing excited some attention. It was thought to be improving. The people spoke well of it, and began somewhat to feel its influence upon their devotions. But power lost by misconduct and regained without penitence was liable to be abused; and self-government was not a sufficient discipline for their youthful minds. Once more, the choir manifested their love for independence, and began to chafe the feelings of the congregation. They were like a bark without a pilot, or a ship without compass or rudder. The uneasiness was increasing, and matters tended toward another crisis.

Just at this period, the good pastor, who was a man of distinguished acquirements, was called to the presidency of a literary institution. His successor, Mr. Youngman, was a clergyman who loved the praises of Zion, and understood how to remedy the evils and to provide for the deficiencies which had so long prevailed. A more unpromising state of things could seldom have been met with, in such a field of labor. But he entertained no fears. The singers had the common feelings of humanity, and they had a conscience which could be enlightened and guided. To conciliate their good will and gain their confidence, and open the way for suitable instruction and timely admonition, he often attended their weekly rehearsals, mingled his voice in the drilling exercises, offered occasional suggestions, and at stated times led them to the mercy-seat in fervent, affectionate prayer. Several members of the church began to follow his example. This was something new and unexpected. The singers were gratified with this mark of attention. They became orderly, docile, and thoughtful. The pastor listened attentively to the exercises of praise in the church, and the choir listened to his preaching and his prayers. Their minds by degrees became open to convictions of duty. They began in some measure to understand the solemn nature of their employment. At a proper time, when things were fully prepared for such a step, he was enabled to bring the subject of praise before his hearers upon the Sabbath, with the happiest success. He manifested such impartiality, such tenderness and candor, and gave such unlooked-for instructions and illustrations, as to convict every one of his hearers of personal delinquency. The preacher made no allusion to scenes which were past. He could not take sides in the matter. But since all had been in the wrong, there was no farther cause of disagreement. Difficulties were at an end. The pastor listened with increasing inter-

est to the performances of the choir, and the singers listened more closely to him. Many of them became seriously-minded, and several appeared truly penitent. A new influence began to be felt in the assembly. The singing appeared more in keeping with the general solemnities of the place. The style, artistically speaking, was much the same as before ; but feelings had greatly changed. Social sympathies were now united. Unanimity of feeling in public worship, is as necessary in praise as in prayer. This principle now began to be understood. Praise was comely and delightful. Thenceforward it was regarded as an important duty and a precious privilege.

What a pity that the former pastor had so little acquaintance with this subject ! A vast amount of sin and perplexity and vexation might thus have been prevented.

X.

OUT OF TUNE.

“A little common sense is a tremendous lever for the removal of obstacles.”—ANON.

A FINE church edifice was nearly completed in the new and thriving parish of H——, when an adult singing-school was opened for the training of a choir. There was but little musical talent in the place; yet in a few short months, the pupils were ready to commence operations. Arranging themselves in a single row extending around the three sides of the gallery, as was then the custom, they made a very promising appearance, as to numbers and respectability. But they were utterly unable to sing in tune. Whatever music might be selected, the same result would follow. The bass would sing a full comma too low. Various expedients were tried to no purpose. Individuals would change their relative position. This was

“To change the place, but keep the pain.”

As all remedies had failed, the evil must be endured. Habits of endurance are often acquired with marvellous facility. Some persons will continue to amuse themselves for six months together, by thrummings upon a crazy instrument which was never in tune for an hour. The ear becomes dull in the process, and the voice loses all accuracy of intonation. Such was the result in the present instance. The people soon became ac-

customed to the dissonance, and regarded it as a small matter. Of course there was no progress in taste, and skill in execution was rapidly diminishing.

One Sabbath, while a chorister was leading, who had barely sufficient knowledge to give the pitch, the choir set off together with two different tunes, one in the major and the other in the minor scale, having no resemblance to each other except in rhythm. The chorister led on from stanza to stanza, unconscious of the mistake. Most of the people seemed quiet. But this dissonance was so inexpressibly bad, that one of the good deacons who had once been a singer, could contain himself no longer. "You will do better up there," said he to the choir, "if you all get the same tune." "Sit down, sit down, deacon," cried a voice from the desk, greatly scandalized by such an interruption. "People would not think so much about the music, if they were worshipping with the Spirit and the understanding."

With such unpropitious beginnings, the music in that choir was ultimately placed upon a good footing, and made greatly instrumental in the progress of good taste and sound principles. The difficulty in the intonation had been occasioned by a wrong position of the singers. They were too scattered. When this fact was discovered, the choir by being placed in a body in the end gallery, soon began to sing in tune. The change was delightful. One of the brethren of the church took pains to qualify himself for usefulness in this field of labor. He was a man of some standing, and soon gained the confidence and good-will of the singers. The singing constantly improved, till it became as remarkable for its excellence as it had been for its harshness and rusticity.

How important is intelligence in the cultivation of church music! The difficulty in the arrangement of the choir, which operated for years, might have been obviated at once.

XI.

UNACCEPTABLE IMPROVEMENTS.

“Innovation is expedient when it remedies an evil, and safe when men are prepared to receive it.”—NOAH WEBSTER.

THE beautiful town of K——, surrounded with smiling valleys and lofty hills, with a small river winding through its environs, was sixty years ago an unbroken wilderness. Its first inhabitants were hard laboring agriculturists from New England. They were not distinguished for learning or information, but were remarkable for their love of religious order, and sound evangelical doctrine. Among the number was the venerable deacon Aimwell, whose memory, notwithstanding some small imperfections which attended him, is still cherished with sincere affection. He had been chosen to office not on account of wealth or worldly wisdom, of which he had little, but on the nobler ground of his attainments in piety. The church regarded him as having made remarkable progress in the divine life, and for this reason as the fittest person for deacon. Had he not been naturally of a modest disposition, this circumstance which could not be hidden from him, might possibly have inflated him with spiritual pride. As it was, that impertinent intruder would sometimes press so vehemently at his door, as with great difficulty to be debarred admittance; and now and then, despite the deacon's efforts, it would contrive to slip in unperceived.

Pride, the deacon said, was an evil thing. He loathed it. But Christian dignity was indispensable to one's usefulness, and should always be maintained. He had naturally a good mind. But as his views had never been expanded by education, they were narrow and limited. He knew little of polemic theology beyond the detail of its current technicalities; but he had a great veneration for sound words, and would watch with solicitude the language of every itinerant preacher who officiated. At length the infant church was supplied with a young, talented, and devoted pastor. The deacon was of course his overseer. After church, the sermon was sure to be canvassed. Every novelty of expression would be noticed, and if the pastor was never caught in error, it was no fault of the deacon. The latter, however, was not a suspicious man. He was watchful and punctilious, and when once he had put his foot down, there it must stand, firm as a rock.

In the days of his childhood, the deacon had been a passable singer, without a knowledge of rules. He had sung so often the counters to St. Martin's, Aylesbury, Wantage, and other tunes of the sort, that he could never forget them, and if a note was ever changed, it seemed to him almost like altering a passage in the Bible.

Through the influence of the pastor, a singing-school was established, which resulted in the formation of a choir. The singers could not read music, but they had committed to memory a class of tunes which were then popular, such as Ocean, Sherborne, Mortality, and Sounding-Joy. These novelties were anything but joyful sounds to the deacon's ear. He would give more for one stanza of St. Martin's than for the whole of them. He was a prudent man. He loved his pastor and was silent; yet many judged by his sorrowful looks, that the music "was no better than it should be." In this instance their decision

was not far from the truth. The tunes were poor, and the teaching was superficial. Once in two or three years, instruction would be obtained, barely sufficient to commit a few additional tunes to memory, and bring to mind some of the forgotten ones. But as schools were never followed by weekly rehearsals, memory would soon become treacherous and produce strange combinations. Two very different tunes would thus be temporarily combined, and on one occasion the choir started off at full speed on a quadruple combination. There was then no want of choristers. Four individuals were appointed to lead in rotation. Forgetting their turns, two or more would sometimes speak together in naming the tune, and then, if one had given a wrong pitch, another one would rise and correct it. When knowledge was so limited, this was doubtless a good arrangement. Still, many sad blunders would occur, and a tune would sometimes sink in forgetfulness at the middle of a stanza. On one occasion, while singing a long hymn, the harmony at the close of every stanza, as a printer might say, "would fall into pi," requiring the pitch to be given anew. At length the chorister, greatly tried with such failures, made his speech to those in the opposite side gallery—"Ladies," said he, "you lose the pitch. Sing softer, and perhaps you will succeed." They obeyed, but to no purpose. So the rest of the hymn was omitted. Such disasters were discouraging. The deacon remonstrated. What use was there in singing-schools? The music was "continually growing worse." Most of the people were of the deacon's mind. So the evils which had been occasioned by deficient instruction were now to be remedied by neglect.

At length a literary institution was established in the place, one of the results of which, was an accession of musical talent. The late selections of psalmody were considered as in bad taste.

The old tunes must be reinstated. The deacon rejoiced prematurely, for now he was to be more grieved than before. The old tunes had received grammatical corrections and changes in the harmony, which in the progress of refinement had become indispensable. All this in his view was needless innovation. Somebody had done wickedly. The old counters he used to sing with so much delight, could no longer be recognized. An explanation was offered, but it came too late. The deacon had set down his foot, and arguments were of no avail. He was a kind-hearted man. He did not wish to make trouble. But he could not help feeling "unhappy about the singing," and the people at large, when they beheld those sorrowful looks in the deacon's seat, were disposed to decide with him that the choir were in fault. The latter, perceiving no prospect of giving satisfaction, concluded to do what seemed to be right, and to be content with pleasing themselves. There was no wrangling, or back-biting. The parties were friends and fellow-worshippers. The choir were conscientious in maintaining their own views, and the people, accustomed to endurance, submitted in a spirit of quiet indifference.

A still greater change was at hand. A few families began the study of church music in good earnest, and soon made rapid advances in the art. The choir was remodeled and trained to an unwonted degree of skill in execution. All of a sudden, the style of selections was entirely changed. The step from St. Martin's and Aylesbury, to Denmark, Easter, and the Hallelujah Chorus, with psalmody of a corresponding character, was prodigious. No wonder the congregation were in the dim distance behind. The music was "Greek" to them. The singers could enjoy it, because it exercised their skill and improved their talents. But what was this to the worshippers at large? Most of them had no knowledge of the art, and cared not to

witness in the sanctuary, any display of its achievements. But they had learned forbearance. When the performances were inflicted upon them, they endured as if pained with a tooth-ache which would soon be over. But a few who had been better educated, soon began to speak highly of the music, and such commendations served to keep the choir in countenance, while they pressed onward to greater achievements, which would be equally lost upon the mass of worshippers.

A question here arises, which is of some practical importance. Why was it, that during this long period, the parties avoided all out-breakings of strife? One reason was, that the people of the choir and the congregation loved each other, and were disposed to make every possible allowance for dissimilarity of views. Another reason was, that the differences were supposed to have their origin in physical Nature. Music was regarded as a natural gift, to be cultivated only by the favored few who should possess the requisite capabilities. To the rest of the world it would become comparatively useless. The choir *pitied* the deacon and most of the congregation, for remarkable deficiencies of ear and voice; and they on their part, were half persuaded that the choir had been very patient in view of such infirmities. A third reason was, that from the first, wrong views had been entertained of the practical influence of church music. All that the deacon knew, was, that when it made him "feel good," he liked it; and the people were generally of his mind.

But there is a question of still greater interest. Why was it that the music had, at all times, so little influence? One reason was, that for a term of years it was very poor. If the singers had understood notation, they might have kept up their weekly rehearsals, and given better performances. Another reason was, the people paid no attention to the subject. Though all have sufficient natural gifts for the purpose here contem-

plated, these gifts will never be available if wholly neglected. Taste thrives only by practice and observation. But a third reason, and perhaps the most influential one, was, that the choir never properly consulted the actual state of musical conception among the people. In their course of refinement they should have descended to the level of the apprehension of the worshippers, and led them onward step by step, just as they could have borne it, and not by such sudden changes, and large gradations, as to render themselves continually unintelligible. This kind of condescension is one of the last things that ever strikes the mind of an amateur choir. "The people ought to be pleased with such music as we give them," they are ready to say, "and if they choose to be stupid the fault is their own." This plea might be more to the purpose in concert rooms, where the object is amusement—but those who lead in public devotion, whether in speech or song, an apostle himself being judge, are bound to commend themselves to the feelings and apprehensions of their hearers. We are not saying that condescension should stoop to musical vulgarity. At present, certainly, there can be no such necessity. A large catalogue of current tunes, which are distinguished for chaste simplicity, is before us. We can select from these, such as will best correspond with the habits of the worshippers, and endeavor to sing them in the true manner and spirit of praise. In this way, the whole class of Aimwells will be interested. Then we can lead onward in better selections, so gently, as to carry with us the kind susceptibilities of the congregation.

XII.

A BOISTEROUS LEADER.

“Rend, with tremendous sound, your ears asunder,
With gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbus and thunder.”—POPE.

THE late Mr. K——, of precious memory, was distinguished as a literary man, a philanthropist, and a Christian. His influence was widely extended and beneficial. His private virtues were not less remarkable than his public benefactions. His habits of conversation evinced much versatility of thought and feeling. He was fond of humor and pleasantry; and at the same time, tenderly alive to objects of sympathy. His emotions were very changeable. He could laugh and weep in the compass of a single paragraph, and still maintain a good measure of self-control. His taste for music appears to have been modified by these peculiarities of temperament. His fondness for the art was free from favoritisms and partialities. He had no choice as to composers or executants; and would be pleased with everything, from the hallowed anthem to the comic song. Like many at the present day, he regarded music of all kinds as essentially beneficial. It was much the same thing to him at church as at a public concert. It was a “kind of nerve-soother” which fitted his mind for devotion.

His children inherited his musical notions and habits, without his susceptibility. His second son had a voice of uncommon

compass and power ; but he had more appetite than taste, and more zeal than discernment. Everything pleased him, from the double chorus of the oratorio down to the songs of the chimney sweep ; and from the grand symphonies of the masters, down to the hurdy-gurdy and the willow-whistle. He was a classical scholar, and pursued music only in hours of relaxation.

At length he left the place of his nativity, and settled as a professional man in one of the rising villages "of the great West," which was destined soon to become a large inland city. There was then so little music in the place that he saw no *legal* objection against lending a helping hand. At his suggestion, the S—— church procured a powerful organ ; and he volunteered his services as general director of their music. A man of his standing in community would meet with few obstacles. He soon drew around him a numerous and powerful choir. The singers put on strength, and the organist drew out his stops ; but the voice of the leader was a full match for all. He was not to be overpowered. They were a noble company who occupied that place ; and though their performances were harsh and dissonant, and wanting in expression, the good people, being neither critics nor amateurs, thought proper to be satisfied with the style. If they could not enjoy the music, it must be owing to their neglect of the art. Schools were established, and rehearsals and concerts multiplied. The leader had unbounded influence, and everything was left to his management. The schools were somewhat beneficial to the people, but not to himself. His habits were fixed. To the hints of a teacher he paid no more attention than was indispensable to the maintenance of mere civility. His father knew more than all the teachers, and what would he have cared for such trifles ! Rehearsals, being under his own control, served to perpetuate

the style of the leader. As for his concerts, they were often filled with such incongruities as to be very amusing. He would bring together on those occasions, besides his own choir, ballad-singers of all grades; and as many sorts of musical instruments as were found of old at the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's image. And, generally, he had little concern about specific influences. As amusement was the chief object, one thing was about as important as another.

On one occasion, for example, the house was crowded by villagers who were invited to a concert of *Sacred Music*. A clergyman opened the exercises by prayer. Then came a merry quartet of some ten minutes' length, upon a chest of viols whose squeaking sounds showed less of resin than of flourishes of the bow. Next came a psalm, then an anthem, and then a favorite little Miss must sing a love ditty, and another must accompany her on a harp. Then came a duet on horns, then an insipid ballad, followed by the hail-stone-chorus, and by another glee, and another rude quartet of cat-gut. Here was a merry interval of ten minutes. Then, after a complimentary address from the pulpit—"Music hath charms," &c., the second part commenced with a grand military march with wind instruments, in connection with the tamborine, the triangle, and the bass and kettle drums. Then came several volunteer solos, including one by the director, of stentorian energy; when, after a glee and another miserable ballad, the exercises closed with the Hallelujah chorus and the benediction. Such incongruities in selections for concerts were ordinary occurrences.

Such a general course of mismanagement as is here presented, would necessarily prove disastrous to the progress of taste. Streams cannot rise above their sources; and in this case, when they came to the height of the leader's gauge, they stood for years "upon a dead level." When the population had increas-

ed to the dimensions of a city, other choirs were organized whose performances were effective and devotional. But the choir of this church continued its noisy, tasteless, hum-drum utterances long after the leader disappeared. He left his own impress upon the performances, which will probably continue till the next generation. How important is it that effort should be rightly directed ! Choirs are often drilled when their leaders are most in fault.

XIII.

BAD LOCATION.

"Give us room that we may dwell."—KELLY.

THE position and the effective power of singers are things of great importance: they are not sufficiently regarded, either in the erection of edifices or the establishment of choirs. There was a small choir in one of our large cities, that took their station in a low edifice at the remotest distance from the pulpit. As there was no gallery, four or five short slips near the entrance of the building had, for the accommodation of the singers, been elevated a few inches above the general level. The choir were amateur performers, who had enjoyed the best advantages of instruction. They practiced much, sung very sweetly at rehearsals, and enjoyed each other's society as a happy Christian family should do. They sung from principle, and with devotional feeling. Their voices, trained in the parlor, were subdued and polished, rather than strong and effective. But they were exemplary in their deportment, punctual in their attendance, and unwearied in their efforts to please the congregation. But there was one point in which they failed. Instead of their being leaders in the exercise, they were led by the people, and nearly overwhelmed by the confused jargon which filled the house. Had their seats been near the desk or been sufficiently elevated, or had their numbers been enlarged, or

had they possessed powers which were strongly effective, their services might have been greatly beneficial. But placed as they were, and with such powers as they possessed, they really were of no more service to the congregation than an ordinary precentor under the pulpit would have been. The choir were to be pitied rather than blamed. The fault was not their own—and they enjoyed, no doubt, the sweet consciousness of having endeavored to discharge their duty in the fear of God.

Cases equally unfortunate have often occurred. Splendid edifices are erected with ample accommodations for the people at large; while the singers, perhaps, are placed beyond reaching distance in the back-ground, or posted aloft in some little niche like a sparrow's nest as to size and convenience. These things ought not so to be.

XIV.

INFLUENCES RIGHT, BUT NOT PERPETUATED.

“And made that music, which was noise before.”—POPE.

MAN has sometimes been regarded by speculative philosophers, as a mere “bundle of habits.” The theory, of course, is erroneous; but there are some strange things in human nature which seem strongly to favor it. Virtuous communities, for example, will adhere to certain specific practices, long after their immoral tendency has been discovered. Objects of taste, too, will often continue to be cherished, long after they have proved themselves to be worthless. We see this everywhere in the common affairs of life. But nowhere, perhaps, does the power of habit find a fuller illustration, than in some of the religious assemblies in large cities, where, for more than a century past, the rudest congregational singing has prevailed.

The church of K—— will serve as a specimen. Some thirty years ago, the members of that community had been so long accustomed to this method of conducting the office of praise, as to be with difficulty convinced of its deficiencies. Nor could they be persuaded that any other method might be preferable. Precentors, one after another, in unbroken succession, had lead in front of the desk; some of them remarkably ignorant, and others no better than they should have been, in manners or morals. But they were fair to look upon, and famous for

vociferation. They might truly have been termed leaders, for the congregation were, in point of time, always at a distance behind them; some nearer, and others more remote. Usually, at the end of each stanza there was a long pause, in the front ranks, till those in the rear could have time to "bring up," and be ready for another start. Musically speaking, there was neither time, tone, nor tune, in the exercise; while in reference to language, there was no articulation, accent, emphasis, or expression. The utterance was rough, noisy, drawling, and unintelligible. Persons sitting side by side, could not understand each other. Could this be called singing? Not a single element of music or poetry was discoverable in the exercise. It was mere discordant noise. Yet with many educated people, this contemptible jargon passed for tolerable music. It was such as they had been long accustomed to hear.

The exercise was also *considered* highly devotional. Such an advantage would certainly atone, they thought, for great deficiencies in manner, and go far towards proving the inutility of cultivation. Artistic influences are unfavorable to spirituality. They have often proved its greatest hinderance. They should ever be regarded with Christian vigilance. Thus they reasoned.

But let us for a moment fix our eyes upon such an assembly as the one we are describing. What do we see? *All* is not barrenness. A few happy souls appear to enjoy the hymn as it falls in mangled fragrance before them. We will regard *these* as sincere worshippers, more or less profited by the exercise of their privilege. The rest of the people are lounging or attending to other matters. The sexton and the deacons are disposing of the "odds and ends of things." And now, ere the hymn is half finished, there comes a sort of scoop-net along the seats, fishing for pennies! This is not a special occurrence. Sabbath after Sabbath the same scene is presented, with little variation.

Are these the tokens of peculiar devotion? What if such things were to be done during the exercise of social prayer? Yet the argument in favor of such a rude congregational method, proceeds on the assumption that it is peculiarly devotional.

Thirty years ago, as we have said, the method of singing in the church of K—— was the congregational one. About that period, a pastor was installed over the people, who had been accustomed to regard the office of praise as equally solemn with that of prayer. He was a competent judge of music; and entertained views of it which were evangelical. To him, the jargon was insupportable. But what could he do? The people were so accustomed to it, as to be strongly prejudiced in its favor. They were entirely satisfied. They had no idea of progress; and were opposed to innovation. He must, therefore, not complain of the existing method, but endeavor gradually to improve it. Of course, the people would not consent to receive instruction. They did not perceive its necessity. The singing was about the same as it had been the last half century, and they would find neither time nor inclination to make it better. All this the discriminating pastor saw at a glance. There could be no use in disturbing prejudices and notions which were of such long standing. But, “wherever there is a will there is a way.” He kept his own counsel, and went silently at work, with the expectation of success.

Soon there was found, sitting in her own family pew, a few steps from the desk, an excellent soprano singer, whose voice was remarkable at once for sweetness and power. Near by, in the same range, was sitting a parishioner whose well-directed and powerful utterances would cause the very arches to tremble. The pastor himself was an excellent singer; and just before him was a talented precentor. The four individuals were sufficiently fond of music to be often practising together. How

much of this arrangement was purely accidental, or the result of prudent forecast, no one thought to inquire. But here was the advantage of a powerful quartet, leading with irresistible energy, though in an unpretending manner, the voices of the assembly. They labored to good purpose. A gradual improvement in the exercises soon became manifest. The people became more attentive and more devotional. They advanced in taste and discrimination. Many, no longer satisfied with their own noises, became silent worshippers. Others received private instruction; and others still, who had some knowledge in psalmody, improved themselves by careful practice. Then a school was opened, accessible to all who might desire its advantages. In this gradual, pleasant way, the manner of singing became so greatly changed, as to excite observation throughout the city, and lead other churches to the adoption of similar arrangements. The change had been so apparently incidental, that no one felt displeased; and prejudices were evidently beginning to lose their hold upon the people.

And now the congregation seem to have been prepared for instructions from the desk relative to the solemn nature of praise. Such instructions were greatly needed, and no time would have been more favorable. The nature of praise beginning to be better appreciated than it ever had been, might now have been easily discriminated from that musical sentimentality and artistic emulation, which, in city life, furnish so many temptations and entanglements. Such instructions would have been a safe-guard from surrounding dangers, in the onward course of improvement. But, unhappily, as the dangers were not foreseen, the instructions were withheld.

The pastor now found no difficulty in persuading his people to furnish the church with an organ. It was an excellent instrument, and the performances were under his general direction.

Voluntaries, preludes, interludes, and accompaniments, were all chaste, simple, and subdued. The effect thus far was favorable. The people were gratified. The songs of praise excited more and more interest; and appeared to be increasingly devotional. The time was drawing near when the pastor would gladly have given specific instructions to his people. This he had fully prepared to do; but just then, his health failed him. He sickened and died; and the fair prospects were soon obscured. He had from the first been the life and soul of the improvements. No one else had understood the secret springs of influence; and now artistic principles were destined to gain the ascendancy.

The talented organist, no longer held in check, began to exhibit increasing measures of skill. The change was gradual, and it wrought insensibly upon the feelings of the people, till he had them in his power. He was too prudent to shock their ideas of religious propriety, and calculated for most of his success on the lapse of time, till habits could be insensibly formed. His wisdom and discernment were worthy of a better object than the one he was pursuing. A few years saw him at the height of his ambition, as sole director of an artistic choir, whose performances had less hold upon the Christian susceptibilities of the people, than upon their taste for display. Musical cultivation went onward, leaving devotional influences in the dim distance.

Congregations in a large city will often greatly change after the removal of a beloved pastor. Such was the case in the instance before us. The present pastor, with no knowledge of music, leaves all to the direction of the organist. He is an excellent talented man, but having left this field of effort in the hands of an ambitious artist, the present skilful personations of praise are perhaps even farther removed from the ends of spir-

itual worship, than were the original abuses which under the former pastor had been so happily removed.

We see from this sketch, that when important improvements are being established, the reasons for them should not be too long delayed. In this case, as in many others, a small amount of information would have prevented the miscarriage.

XV.

A FICKLE PEOPLE.

“Learn to labor and to wait.”—LONGFELLOW.

THERE was a congregation in the large inland town of L——, who were remarkable for fickleness in their musical transactions. Some features in every arrangement would create dissatisfaction, and call for a change. Almost everything in turn would be tried, but not with sufficient thoroughness to ensure permanent success. There was a pleasant-toned organ in the church; but its powers were too limited to control the voices of the singers, which would often be out of tune. A choir of some kind were always in the gallery, but the members and the leaders were continually changing. Choristers of every sort would be severally tried and dismissed; and on one occasion the chorister chosen out of many candidates, found it necessary to leave the situation before his year had expired. The choristers, too, would be chosen from different musical cliques, whose interests were opposed to each other. This would occasion corresponding changes of books and methods of practice in rehearsals—leading to those petty strifes and mortifications which, though insufficient to mar the peace of society, were great hinderances to the progress of skill and refinement. The same irritability was observed in musical committees. The individuals who had the matter in charge would go rashly for-

ward, nothing doubting as to their practical wisdom ; but soon, plunging into inextricable difficulties, would retire and give place to others, who, without profiting by past experiments, would meet with a similar defeat.

The people of the congregation became impatient with the singers, but imagined themselves to be afflicted with a necessary evil. "Singers," they would say, "are always restless and irritable—always prone to make difficulty. We must endeavor to bear with them." The house of worship would always be filled ; for it had a fine location, and was supplied with excellent preaching. Yet so many would be driven away by the bad singing, that the congregation were scarcely more stable than were members of the choir.

One might have supposed that, in process of time, these fluctuations would have terminated ; yet more than fifteen years elapsed before the evidences of greater permanency appeared. And this was in the midst of an intelligent, Christian population, embracing several well-conducted choirs, with no ordinary share of musical skill and refinement.

Now, how shall we account for all this instability ?

In the first place, the people did not feel that deep and decided interest in the subject which would have led them to acquire the necessary practical knowledge, and to make pecuniary appropriations with sufficient liberality. A wish to avoid trouble and expense, led, of course, to the exercise of a temporizing policy. Arrangements, in order to be permanent and satisfactory, must be made with due intelligence and forecast.

In the second place, a strong, general, business-like idea of the importance of good music to the prosperity of a congregation, led the people to be impatient of gradual results. They could not wait for progressive maturity. It was supposed that by some possible arrangement, the desired object could be

speedily obtained. But, since the "ploughman would not be overtaken by the reaper," that which was beginning to put forth leaves and blossoms, must be uprooted to make way for a new process of seeding.

But thirdly, this subject had never been taken in hand as a solemn duty. Other choirs in town had been organized and sustained on Christian principles, and their success was found to be permanent. But the congregation before us, entertained different views of responsibility. "Music," they said, "ought to be cultivated like painting and sculpture. It was no part of religion, but an art to be encouraged, because of its usefulness in Christian assemblies." Thus, by a mixture of truth and error in their principles, they virtually secularized the entire interest, and regarded those as superstitious, who insisted upon the importance of religious training. No wonder they failed to succeed. Success would have been impossible.

XVI.

AN ORGANIST A WOULD-BE LEADER.

Governed theoretically and practically by whims."—JACOBI.

THE land of steady habits furnishes many a noble example of stability in the praises of Zion. The same counsels have prevailed from year to year, and sometimes from generation to generation. How desirable is such stability where counsels are wise, and practices are rightly directed! But examples of instability are not wanting, even in New England.

In the beautiful village of J——, there was in one of the principal churches a large choir, whose performances had for a long time been remarkable for their excellence. Things were not *always* right, for in the absence of better information, artistic principles would sometimes be too predominant. But the leading members of the choir were truly conscientious, and acted up to the amount of their knowledge, as spiritual worshippers. The congregation were greatly interested in the exercises, and for the most part considered them highly devotional. The pastor, with a small amount of musical skill, would seek to favor the choir, and one of his deacons was among the leading singers. Everything was harmonious in the two-fold sense of the word. There was good music and entire unanimity of feeling. Not a single difficulty arose to mar the enjoyment for years in succession. The happy example of this choir be-

came widely influential in the establishment of similar associations.

But at length the lapse of years witnessed important changes. Several of the leading members of that choir had gone to their heavenly rest. Some had retired from the gallery, and others had left the village. Among the latter were the teacher, and the chorister, and the deacon. Another pastor now occupied the desk, who, though a better singer than his predecessor, was remarkable for his dread of all *musical* responsibility. He was young and talented, and amiable in his deportment. He was emphatically a good man, deeply devoted to the duties of his profession. His want of decision in regard to exercises of praise was unfortunate. A little courage and energy and perseverance in regard to the choir, would have sufficed to perpetuate the former influences. But the entire management was now for the first time, given into the hands of the trustees of the society, not one of whom was really competent to sustain such a responsibility.

There was still an efficient choir and an excellent chorister. But the trustees chose to act independently. A large organ was placed in the choir-loft, occupying some portion of the room which had been filled by the singers. Every pipe in so splendid an instrument must be allowed the freedom of speech, though by this means the singers should be overpowered. The singers also were greatly crowded. As to the first of these difficulties the chorister felt little concern, for the people would soon find that they might have too much even of a good thing. But the seats—these could neither be multiplied nor extended. So the chorister and the deacon, greatly beloved and respected by the singers, concluded to set an example of condescension. Leaving all the cushioned seats to the singers, they planted themselves upon a pine bench placed for the purpose, in a small

vacancy in front of the organ. The thing was done so gently, and with so good a grace, that not a word was said. There was now room for all, and causes of complaint (no thanks to the trustees) were fully obviated.

The organist was a man of skill, and in some respects a good accompanist. He was, however, one of those musical students of whom it might be said that "a little learning is a dangerous thing." He was superficial and opinionated. Partially conversant with German music of a high order, which abounds in mimetic imitation, he sought to plume himself with achievements of a similar nature. He could manufacture darkness and sunlight, haloes and moonshine, in any quantity, at the shortest notice. He usually kept his eye upon the text, and words and phrases, independently of all connection, were the special calls for his expression. He was, in fact, a musical punster of a graver sort. If he saw the words "upward I raise," up went the touches to altissimo—or the words "down my thoughts,"—down went the minstrelsey into the cavernous depths of the instrument. If the poet said "*no* thunder"—"*no* tempest"—it was enough. The thunder and the tempest would be forthcoming, though the poet should be virtually contradicted. He had also a decided fondness for power in two respects. He loved a powerful accompaniment, and he was ambitious of becoming sole director of the music. The present chorister, therefore, was directly in his way.

For a few years the singing, in connection with the organ, retained much of its former character, and continued to please. But on a sudden the chorister was called to another field of labor. The organist exulted. He felt like a prisoner let loose from confinement. Now was the time to obtain the coveted prerogative. Why should a man of his acquirements be continually crippled by restrictions and limitations? He had been

too long under tutors and governors. He "ought certainly to be able to manage without an overseer." The singing had "never been sufficiently skilful. The art rightly applied," he said, was "susceptible of higher effects." He had very little respect for the talent of the existing choir. They were "good people, but no musicians."

The singers, however, had sufficient evidence of the incompetence of the organist in vocal music, and made a faithful though prudent representation of their views to the trustees. His notions were all artistic—he was sufficiently enthusiastic and sanguine of success. But he had no voice. He had no experience in teaching. His judgment was not stable. He was whimsical. He had no skill in discipline, and no tact in management. These representations, however, were of no avail. The singers, it was thought, must be strongly prejudiced. Indeed, the organist had preceded them in his accusations; and as he had played himself into favor with the people, all remonstrance was useless. The choir would no longer consent to sing without an efficient leader. The trustees thought them unreasonable. The pastor, like the organist, was inclined to look on the bright side of the subject. He thought the singers would not leave. He presumed that the matter could be easily adjusted.

It was, indeed, presumption. The very first Sabbath after the new appointment, the singers left the gallery, to the chagrin of the organist and the vexation of the trustees. They acted wisely. For a long time their services had been ill-appreciated—and now a leader was appointed over them contrary to their known wishes, and one whom it would be impossible for them to follow. He himself had spoken disrespectfully of their talents; and why should they place themselves under his direction? They could not act so foolishly. They made no further

complaint. They had done what they could, and had left the seats peacefully, to be occupied by other incumbents.

The organist rallied. He puffed, and blowed, and fretted, and finally bowed and simpered, and gained from the "upper classes" a band of fresh volunteers, who, no doubt, would far outshine their predecessors. But, unhappily, the new-comers lacked discipline. They were impracticable. They were not to be drilled either into style or punctuality. They came up only for a few Sabbaths, just to show what might be done, and to keep the poor organist in heart. They were not the persons to accomplish the work; to stand in the breech and assume responsibilities. Of course, their example was ineffectual. They soon retired, and left the organist once more in trouble. Gladly would he have greeted the return of the former choir, for the failure had somewhat lessened his self-esteem. But this could not be. There was no efficient leader. Devotional ideas had been set aside. The trustees were ignorant of the subject; and the church and pastor would assume no responsibility. How *could* the choir, under such circumstances, resume their seats, and maintain, as formerly, the attitude of solemn worshippers?

Artistic principles now held the predominance; and the church and people had united in the arrangement. The change was disastrous. The members of the old choir soon began to be censured. Grievous imprudences were laid to their charge, of which they were entirely innocent. They were accounted stubborn and wilful. But this was not true. They acted from principle, and acted wisely. Yet the case was differently represented. And thus, a conscientious, united band of singers, driven from their seats by counsels which had put it out of their power to enjoy the privilege of sincere worshippers, were made to bear, like scape-goats, the sins of the organist and congregation. Every movement would fail. Nothing would

be stable—nothing would be attended with success. Hired singers must be procured. The organ must be enlarged and better located. The congregational method must be tried; then another voluntary choir; and then a real "*prima donna*." Nothing could give satisfaction. Every failure, however, would be traced back to the period when the seats were first vacated. The first choir had inflicted all the injury.

But why refer the repeated miscarriages to them? Why not go back to the treatment which they had received and borne with Christian fortitude, till forbearance had ceased to be a virtue? The choir acted nobly. It was the people who had sinned. In their ignorance they had been guilty of ingratitude and abuse. They had sacrificed the spirit of praise to the idolatries of taste, and like others who had been equally inconsiderate, had plunged themselves into inextricable difficulties. Another generation may yet pass, before the merits of the subject will be understood. Yet, a small amount of information, faithfully acted upon, would in the first instance of difficulty, have prevented the entire train of evils.

XVII.

BACKWARD AND FORWARD.

"Man MUST err,
Till he has ceased to struggle."—SHELLEY.

Not far from one of the western villages of this State, the track of a much travelled railroad runs repeatedly backward and forward, at very acute angles. Inattentive passengers may fancy that they have been advancing many miles, when in fact they have been making but little progress, except in a lateral direction. Such has been the zigzag course of psalmody in the American churches.

Previous to the revolutionary war, the strains of the sixteenth century formed a leading feature in the songs of praise, but before the struggle was over which established our independence, foreign music was extensively laid aside in favor of home productions. The latter, while designed for the church, were as undevotional in spirit as rude in structure. They were wild and artless, but full of life, and noise, and novelty. As there was then but little taste in the country, they soon became popular; but at length their irreligious tendencies created alarm. This, in the course of a few years, brought them into general disrepute. The next movement was backward, to the music which had formerly been discarded. The people for awhile demurred and hesitated, but finally acquiesced, and sunk into a

profound repose, from which no appliances of argument or motive could succeed in arousing them. The old music had been sufficiently celebrated, but it could not awaken their sympathies. It seemed to savor of *indolence*, *dulness*, and *monotony*. What was it to them, that three centuries ago, these tunes had been sung in a foreign land, by a Huss, a Zwingli, or a Luther? American singers required music more appropriate to their own times and circumstances; music which they could appreciate and enjoy. For several years, therefore, an increasing indifference was manifested.

Meanwhile, some of the neglecters of the art, delightfully employed in revivals of religion, began to apply rudely-constructed hymns to the music of low, familiar songs and ballads. The new pieces were so far removed from the stiffness and monotony of the chorals, as to be more exciting. This circumstance rendered them popular. For awhile, in many portions of the country, their effect was electrical. But whenever a revival had subsided, and there was more leisure to attend to the subject, it was found that the music, in spite of the devotional words, would bring to mind the old songs and ballads. Music having associations so disastrous to spiritual worship, could not continue long in favor. The tunes in a little time became disgusting, and were generally discarded. They proved more undesirable than the chorals, or even the senseless productions which had preceded them. The general interest in psalmody was again decreasing.

From this period, the progress of psalmodic selections was directly onward. Spirit-stirring melodies and movements of a chant-like character, uninjured by profane associations, were now mingled with the old chorals. The people once more became interested, and awoke to the importance of taste and judgment in the selection of tunes. Books and singers and

schools, adult and juvenile, increased throughout the land ; and the numbers have since been accumulating up to the present hour.

The style of execution in psalmody has not unfrequently been marked by similar vicissitudes. This observation has more reference to particular choirs than to the community at large.

The choir in the old church in L——, while conforming to the above-mentioned changes in selection, received instruction, for a period of some twenty years, from eight different teachers, each of whom was unhappily but a “man of one idea.” The first teacher was skilled in notation, but entirely deficient in style. When his term had expired, his pupils could read music ; but their style was monotonous and insipid. The second teacher was a prodigy in teaching rhythm. He was a walking metronome. While singing, every joint would be in motion, like the workings of machinery. Under his instruction the choir became good timists, but nothing more. No attention had yet been devoted to the cultivation of the voice. The third teacher was the man to supply this deficiency. “What is the use in keeping time,” said he, “while the voices are unmusical ?” He was a bad timist with a pleasant voice ; so, in his constant vocalization, he indirectly promoted negligence of rhythm, till the influence of the training of his predecessor had disappeared. The fourth teacher, being a rhythmist, soon restored regularity in respect of time ; but through the inveterate habit of snuff-taking, his voice had become nasal ; and the tones of the singers were injured through unconscious imitations of his voice.

The fifth teacher was remarkable chiefly for articulation. He had studied orthoepy to some good purpose ; but was ignorant of style. “Of what use are pleasantness of tone or accuracy

in time," said he, "if the words are never to be heard?" Time, he said, was essential to the simultaneous utterance of words, but beyond this it required little attention. Good articulation, said he, depends upon the distinct utterance of the consonants. The singers, therefore, were drilled so exclusively upon the elements of the consonants, that, through the habitual neglect of vowels, their voices lost their remaining polish, and became worse than ever.

The sixth teacher had a sensitive ear, with much affectation of refinement. As he had but little knowledge, he chose to pass for a natural genius. He abounded in extravagant expressions. He would be "absolutely tortured" by trifling aberrations from the pitch; and the roughness of consonants in articulation would be "quite horrifying." "Why should the 'heavenly charms' of song," said he, "be converted into drawling recitations." So the sibilants must be silent, the aspirates must withhold their breath, and the mutes be entirely dumb; while only vowels, labials, and liquids, must remain as representatives of the language. Of course, good articulation was destroyed.

The seventh teacher was famous for "good vocal delivery." He had a commanding voice, and was sufficiently proud of it; but he would sing so loud as to destroy all balance in the harmony, and cause aberrations from the pitch. He was however faithful to his one purpose. "Articulation, and accent, and emphasis, and the pauses, and the management of the breath," said he, "are all essentials in language; and what is the use of pretending to sing hymns, if the language is to be destroyed by the music?" A momentous question truly; and one which should not have been so many years deferred. But in his exclusive devotement to these essentials, in verbal delivery, he neglected tone, and tune, and time, till in these latter respects the singing had miserably degenerated.

The eighth teacher was a sentimentalist. He was addicted to light reading, and would often be rubbing his eyes over some sorry novel. "Music," he would say, "is the language of the soul" (referring, doubtless, to emotion, such as the mere artist may feel). "Music must be full of sentiment. Sentiment is everything. What use is there in good vocal delivery without feeling?" A very important question to be sure, if he had fully apprehended its meaning. But his definitions and directions were of little account, and his illustrations were ridiculous. When a tune pleased him, he would rub his hands, work up his face into curious distortions, breathe short, and look altogether so queerly, as to call forth a laugh, unless his pupils were particularly upon their guard. They admitted the propriety of emotions in singing; but these would never come for his bidding. This was beyond the depths of his philosophy. He could not understand it. The singers must be greatly deficient in sensibility if they could not sympathize with him.

All these conflicting changes, of course, could not have occurred among the same individuals in any short period of time; but, as the several seasons of instruction referred to were separated from each other by intervals of two or three years, and as few of the singers would stay many years in the choir, the disagreements among teachers excited little observation.

At length, a period arrived when an able instructor was employed, whose well-digested system of training led the course of improvement directly onward. He took in hand, severally, the essential properties in style, giving to each its relative share of attention; crowning the whole, by strongly inculcating mental habits and principles, in connection with the office of praise. His success was so pleasing and so unprecedented, that from that time forward no other teacher could find employment in the place, while his services could be secured.

How great is the importance of employing good teachers, and continuing their services in the same places, till their work can in some measure be perfected ! The influence of wrong selections of music, as we have seen, must be very disastrous, but the employment of incompetent teachers is still more so, especially where their instructions are partial and contradictory. By such means as these, the choir of the old Church in L——, were laboring twenty years before their style became mature and permanently effective.

XVIII.

AN INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE FOR CITY CHURCHES.

“ Let all your sacred passions move,
While you rehearse his deeds.”—WATTS.

THE old M—— church which stood in the business portion of one of the largest cities in the Union, was long since demolished by the rush of commercial enterprise. It was large and commodious, though unsightly and ill-proportioned. The people who worshipped there, were chiefly from those classes in society, who were the most forward in Christian activity. They were favored with an earnest ministry. Addresses from the pulpit, though plain and unpolished, were eminently logical and persuasive. They turned back many a one from the paths of the destroyer, and led him in the ways of righteousness and peace.

The city from its earliest foundation had been noted for the prevalence of congregational singing. The few feeble choirs that had latterly been organized, could not long be sustained. Whether hired or voluntary it mattered not. There was a want of energy and a deficiency in skill. One of these choirs, for example, sung on a certain occasion from four different editions of the same music-book, without discovering that the harmonies were different in each. They read as “ by guess.” Little attention had been paid to rules. Music syllables had been discarded, and the practice of beating time, at rehearsals, had be-

come the subject of ridicule. The performances of such choirs were neither agreeable in manner, or devotional in spirit.

But the enterprising people at the M—— church, blessed as they were by an excellent minister, could not be satisfied with such miserable singing. What should hinder them from establishing a choir on better principles? True, they could not pretend to musical talent or taste, or peculiar susceptibility. But these were things to be gained by study and practice. Former efforts had been feeble, desultory, and ill-advised, and they had not been based upon religious principles. Praise should be sedulously promoted and sustained as a Christian employment, and a delightful privilege.

The present state of things could no longer be tolerated. An adult singing-school was established, under the charge of a pious and talented teacher. Those who were the most active in every other good work, were the most faithful and persevering in this. They acted from principle. They were earnest and ardent, and instruction took fast hold upon them. When a few months had elapsed, and long before their voices could be well matured, they organized themselves into a choir, and took their places in the gallery. They did not pretend to be artists. They had gained but little skill in execution. They were not equal to the strains of a Mozart, a Beethoven, or a Mendelssohn. There was not a Caradora or a Sontag among them; not an individual who could anywhere have sustained the reputation of a solo singer. But with a goodly number of chaste, familiar melodies before them, they were enabled as a choir, to speak forth the praises of God in a remarkably solemn and impressive manner. The voices were numerous and powerful. Moving in the plainest harmony and the simplest rhythm, they kept together, and so acted upon each other, as to form a fair specimen of chorus-singing.

What if the critic could now and then discover the grating of a harsh consonant, or the misapplication of an accent or emphasis? And what if the melodies were too simple or too ballad-like to meet his notions of artistic propriety? They were precisely such as the circumstances then demanded, and were, therefore, sufficiently in character. They had never been injured by profane associations. They were of a popular cast, easily understood and appreciated, and the choir could speak through them effectually to the conscience and to the heart. Their dynamics resulted more from feeling than from art. Adaptations were generally happy; and both the words and the music were strongly characteristic. Minor discrepancies were lost in the loud volume of sound; and the singing, in the favorable circumstances which attended it, appeared better than it really was. Yet it was truly excellent in the best point of view. No church music in the city could then compare with it in religious utility.

Nor was improvement confined to the choir. The congregation grew less discordant, and their efforts were becoming more regular and consentaneous. The *sub-basses*, who used to sing the melody a fifteenth below the pitch, and the *drawlers*, who would be so marvellously behind time, had either been shamed into silence, or been better instructed. Even the *monotones* had learned to be dissatisfied with *droning*. All, while evidently improving, seemed pleased and edified; and a mutual sympathy was maintained between the choir and congregation.

A style so unpretending, so readily acquired, and yet so influential, could not fail to excite observation. Many could not understand it. Artists considered it too unclassical; amateurs complained of its deficiencies and innovations; and critics were sure that something better could be devised. They tried their skill amid the surrounding congregations, but were foiled in

every effort. One scheme after another would be defeated. But the choir at M—— were never in difficulty. Their music was permanent and always improving. At length the secret was manifest. The choir consisted chiefly of conscientious, intelligent worshippers. They were neither “hired singers,” nor “amateur performers,” nor vague sentimentalists, but members of a Christian church, sustaining the office of praise in spirit, as well as in manner, under an apprehension of the all-pervading presence of the heart searching God.

The choir had taken the right position, and were able to maintain it. They reasoned thus:—“If mere musical enjoyment is to be our object of pursuit, let us purchase tickets and spend occasional evenings at the concert rooms; but if spiritual worship is the chief desideratum in the exercises of praise, let us prepare ourselves, and personally engage in them, as in other religious duties, and endeavor to obtain the divine blessing upon our exertions.” They acted on true Christian principles, and were never disappointed. Their labors were abundantly rewarded in the sweet religious enjoyment which attended them. Their style continued to improve. No other singing gave such general satisfaction to the friends of evangelical piety. Other congregations in the city began to profit by their example; and strangers from every part of the land, as they visited the city, were struck with surprise at the visible improvement they witnessed in the songs of praise.

Years have passed since the old edifice was demolished. When it was abandoned, the choir dispersed through various portions of the city, acting like leaven upon the mass of singers who had already felt the power of their example. That influence is not lost. Several choirs in the city are still established and conducted on the same general principles. If other churches persist in allowing mere artistic personations of praise, let them

not complain of irascibility as peculiar to musicians. They would find full as much trouble in regulating the office of prayer, if they were to proceed on no better principles. The maintenance of wrong principles in any department of religious worship will be found to make trouble. But let a lesson be taken from the example which was given by the choir of the old M—— church, some twenty years ago, before complaining of labors, sacrifices, and perplexities, in sustaining the office of praise. What a measureless amount of good may sometimes be produced by a single choir, conducted on Christian principles, under the Divine guidance and blessing?

XIX.

SABBATH CONCERTS,

"Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open discussion?"—MILTON.

"WHAT have *I* to do with religion in my singing-school?" exclaimed one whose attention had just been called to the subject. "*Clergymen* are teachers of religion."

"But," replied his professional friend, "the clergy are not teachers of *religious music*. *That* is *our* employment."

"Not exactly. Music is one thing, and religion another. Things which are so different may well be separated. We are *music-teachers*."

"But sacred words are continually before us in the schools. How would you treat them?"

"With becoming reverence, certainly. My schools are never disorderly."

"Would you not have the words illustrated and enforced by the music?"

"To tell the truth, words do not seem so important when the music is effective."

"To me, they seem the more so."

"That is not the prevailing impression."

"Probably it is not. But the office of praise, you know, is established by divine and not human authority."

"The art of music has become a different thing since the Bible was written ; and—"

"But the Bible has not changed. Its precepts are inviolable."

"True. Very true. But music, you know, has become of itself an expressive language ; more deeply so, than that of mere poetry or prose."

"In a high artistic sense it has sometimes put forth such claims. But, come, if the language is so wonderful, just produce me a musical translation of the fifty-first Psalm which will be understood and appreciated."

"We have our penitential style, you know."

"Rather say *pathetic* style. Music is the language of emotion. But emotions need a guide, an interpreter. Men may be sorrowful or glad in reference to wrong objects."

"But remember, I do not lay the words aside."

"You only mean to lessen their importance."

"I may be wrong in this. But look at the listeners at a public concert. What delight is manifested when any beautiful, or pathetic, or sublime ideas are brought out by the performances ! The appeal is felt and responded to, though not a syllable of the language is understood. We never witness such effects from verbal utterances in psalmody."

"Nor should we desire to witness them. The nature of the two cases is entirely dissimilar. In the one, the object is amusement, just as in dramatic exhibitions ; in the other, it is solemn personal worship, in the presence of Omniscience, as in exercises from the sacred desk."

"True ; and we ought to remember this distinction."

"And to act upon it."

"Certainly ; but—"

"I understand your objection. The view I am presenting is

not the popular one. We wish to please our employers ; and it requires much courage to carry such views into effect, as many would be tempted to call them ultra."

"Precisely so."

"My friend, you wish everywhere and at all times to do your duty as a Christian."

"Certainly."

"But the public impression in regard to church-music is substantially wrong. It is too decidedly artistic. Now, if in all our training, in regard to sentiment, we make no practical distinction between artistic and devotional influences, how is the prevailing error to be corrected? Such teaching tends necessarily to its perpetuation."

As no further answer could be given, the conversation ended. The two teachers were intelligent, and they were ardent friends. The one had a call from the choir of the P—— church of a considerable inland town, and the other was kindly urging him to sustain his proper responsibilities as a teacher of religious music. The discussion had some influence ; but as the call was a flattering one, and there was some hurry and bustle in preparing to meet it, no very abiding convictions of duty were produced. Still, important thoughts had been suggested, which would not be entirely forgotten.

The choir of P—— church had long been remarkable for skilful performances. The singers were numerous and powerful, and well united. They had a splendid organ, with a professional player ; and now they obtained a talented teacher and leader. Their singing had not declined. There was no need of an accession of numbers. Every seat was filled. The singing was popular, and the people were sufficiently proud of it. Visitors had praised it. Journalists had often commended it. Lecturers had referred to it as a model of excellence ; and pub-

lishers of music had found their account in sending gratuitous supplies of books for the accommodation of the singers. But, improvement is never stationary; and the only way to prevent retrogression, is to endeavor to move onward in the progress of refinement. This was the reason for employing so talented a teacher.

The new teacher was now in his element. He was kindly received. His instructions were highly prized. All were delighted with his gentlemanly bearing, his ideas of style, and his delicate and intelligent discriminations. The choir library (thanks to the generosity of publishers) was very large; and the singers must now be tasked upon the very highest specimens of the art. Splendid concerts and oratorios must be given in the long winter evenings for the public gratification. "People will have amusements," it was said, "and what could be more harmless and more beneficial than such exhibitions of skill!"

Such an exclusive attention to concert and oratorial selections, however, was encouraging a general fondness for music of a high rhapsodic character, such as is adapted to dramatic interest and artistic display. Selections in psalmody soon manifested the same characteristics. But the people were delighted with the style. Their interest in the music was manifestly increasing. The performances at church were "remarkably effective." Countenances would glow with animation, and eyes would be suffused with tears. And there would often be witnessed the deep impressions of solemnity.

For awhile the teacher was entirely satisfied. Such tokens of feeling, he thought, were unequivocal. The people, no doubt, were as distinguished for religious susceptibility as for refinement in musical taste. But, as he grew more intimately acquainted with individuals, he began to suspect that all was not

right. Such evidences of feeling usually betoken a revival of religion—yet the present was a season of sad religious declension. And how did it happen that all classes, young and old, saints and sinners, were affected nearly alike? That would seem to prove that the influences were chiefly sympathetic. How did it happen, too, that the choir were so given to sentimentality? Emotional tokens were transient. They were not accompanied with deep seriousness. They evidently had more relation to taste than to spiritual worship. Professors of religion, among their numbers, would seem to rush irreverently into the divine presence, with such momentous expressions as would have faltered upon the lips of prayer; and they would often be so absorbed by the music, as to be paying homage to the achievements of art, instead of holding solemn, spiritual communion. These appearances, too, were gradually increasing with the progress in musical improvement.

The teacher was distressed with the state of things. Could it be that the appearances of Christian fervor had been illusory? No one but himself had any suspicion of the kind. He would make more careful inquiries among the people. He did so; but not to his own relief. The people were like the choir. They were not at all scrupulous about the spirit of praise. In the time of prayer they were watchful and self-suspicious; but when the songs of praise arose, they gave themselves up to the influence of fine music, with little thought of personal responsibility. If the music affected them agreeably, they inquired no farther; if it failed to do so, the performances, for once, had been unsuccessful. As to the exact *nature* of their feelings, there had been little inquiry. Good music, they said, fitted the mind for devotion. It made them “enjoy themselves,” and “shed a delightful influence over the other exercises.”

His suspicions were fully confirmed. He had been giving Sabbath concerts he said, during the solemn hours of worship, while the good people had been engaged as amateurs. And then he thought of the proverbialisms among literary men, concerning the superficial nature of musical impressions. "Can it be that the pretensions of the art are fictitious? If the highest specimens produce, in a religious assembly, such influences as are undevotional, what can we say as to the utility of the art?"

In his perplexity he repaired to the residence of his professional friend, and freely unbosomed himself. A second dialogue ensued, which led to the happiest consequences. Various topics came under consideration. Sacred music, technically considered, consists of two departments—the artistic and the devotional. The people at P—— had always confounded this distinction. They had endeavored to worship on merely æsthetic principles. This was fundamentally wrong. The error must be fully exposed and corrected. Refinement does not always proceed in the most profitable directions. In church music it finds an ample field within the limits of chaste simplicity, embracing many things which the mere artist disregards. And, finally, there must be adequate religious instruction in rehearsals of church music. "You now perceive," said the friendly adviser, "the importance of the principle I formerly stated to you. Artistic drilling produces artistic mental associations. Unless you can obviate this evil in the way I have suggested, the influences you so much deprecate will become manifest to others, and ultimately produce an unfavorable reaction. Now is your time for effort. Be prompt, yet prudent and prayerful, and I trust you will be rightly directed."

The advice was timely. The teacher returned to his work with alacrity, and soon a great change became manifest. The good people awoke to feelings of personal responsibility, and

began the work of self-examination. The interest now was receiving a more definite and satisfactory direction; and while there was no decrease in skill, there was a great increase in devotion, which made their singing really efficient in a religious point of view.

XX.

RIVAL LEADERS RECONCILED.

“Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.”—ROMANS, 13: 16.

THE church of O—— is situated in a wealthy farming district, in one of the largest of the “Middle States.” The congregation has worshipped there for more than half a century, with a good measure of prosperity. The choir, however, were not remarkable for unanimity, until they became settled upon a substantial Christian basis.

Their trials were peculiar. Two individuals, the one a thriving merchant, and the other a man of letters, were for many years the only persons deemed capable of giving direction to the music. Both of them were influential men, and professors of religion. They esteemed each other, and could act kindly together on all subjects but one. In their taste for music there was an entire disagreement. Each had too high an idea of his own acquirements. It was not an ebullition of vanity that influenced them, but an honest, deep-seated persuasion of talents which ought to be rendered useful. There was no desire for emolument. Nor was the position of chorister, on the whole, an enviable one. But the music ought to be sustained in the best possible manner. Each was willing to labor and make personal sacrifices, if he might do so according to his own notions of propriety. But there was no acting in concert. They

could agree to differ, and be mutually patient, but nothing farther. There was no umpire to decide between them. Both were inflexible, and both were beloved by the congregation. No alternative was left, therefore, but to give each, in turn, the sole direction for a limited period, as a kind of experiment. This was a constant source of uneasiness, for whichever of the individuals had the temporary ascendancy, he would endeavor to gain the most adherents, while the other, like a shrewd politician, would be operating against his influence. There was no bitterness or clamor. There was nothing unmanly or disingenuous. But there was criticism, which, whether right or wrong in point of accuracy, had just enough of inquietude attending it, to mar those social influences which favor the growth of spirituality, and prevent the progress of refinement in taste. After all, the grounds of the difficulty were comparatively slight. They were not well understood, except by the parties themselves. A little yielding on either hand would have brought them together, to the great gratification of the people.

But who that has any pretensions to art, can fail to be on the defensive when his taste is called in question? It is as if he were accused of deficiency in judgment, or wit, or discernment. Christian principle kept the parties from all appearance of contention, but it did not make them happy in the praises of Zion. There was just enough of unpleasant feeling between them to neutralize taste, and prevent devotion. Preaching and prayer, among that people, were attended with the usual results, while praise seemed at all times an unprofitable exercise.

But how were the unhappy tendencies of this difficulty to be counteracted? They were not a suitable subject for discipline, because the parties were honest and conscientious. No accusation could be brought against them either of discourteous conduct or unchristian feeling. Simple unhappiness in regard to

"affairs of taste," was a thing "to be regretted, rather than blamed." The pastor gave instructions relative to praise as a Christian duty, but these were of a general character, lest he should seem to favor either one of the parties. He spoke of the necessity of skill, but was silent as to the method of applying it. He showed that taste was necessary, but avoided all specific illustrations. He insisted on the maintenance of a spirit of praise, but could not tell how this was to be done in connection with musical practice. His ideas in reference to this topic were greatly confused, for the undue pretensions of art had not yet been exposed. It was imagined that good music, however obtained, must possess some inherent efficiency which would be available. The strong influence of social feelings and mental associations upon music, was not then understood, nor did it occur to any one that music for religious purposes, should be cultivated in a religious manner. Schools and rehearsals were indeed conducted with becoming gravity, but the drilling was artistic, and no special attention was bestowed on the training of emotions, or on the preservation of spirituality. Under all the attending circumstances, therefore, it was not wonderful that the people derived little benefit from the exercises of praise. And, not experiencing the utility of music, where would be the advantage in promoting it? They knew that it ought to be decently sustained, but as yet, it had been too barren of results to awaken general interest. From year to year there was no increase of skill or visible improvement in taste or spirituality. In all these respects it might rather be said there was a gradual decline.

But an important change was at hand. The literary man was one day stating his grievances to an intelligent Christian friend, who lived at a distance, and had known nothing of the matter. The friend finally suggested to him a remedy which

would prove effectual. "The parties," said he, "must come together on some plan of mutual co-operation. This is indispensable. The irritation of feeling must forever cease. It is wrong. Taste can never be promoted without feelings of unanimity, nor can it by any possible process be suddenly superinduced, especially upon the merchant, who is now for a season to be the leader. His taste after all must be quite equal to that of the community around him, or they would manifest less satisfaction with his direction, and give you the decided preference. Others are not so well informed as you are. The people, therefore, pay deference to your views as long as you have charge of the music. But blind acquiescence in the decisions of an acknowledged superior, is of little avail in the promotion of taste. Something far different is demanded for such a purpose. This, my friend," said he, "*you* can fully understand. Your own experience should teach you this lesson. You can never in this way elevate the standard of taste, for the thing is impossible."

"What, then, would you advise?" said the complainant.

"You must condescend," he replied. "You must do it thoroughly. You must do it heartily, affectionately, and in a truly Christian spirit."

"Why should I do this in matters of taste?"

"Because it is needful. You must begin at the foundation of things and build upward. The taste of the people must be so far consulted as to secure on their part an intelligent interest in the music placed before them; and must be led onward in refinement so gradually, as to secure a well-ordered and substantial growth of improvement."

At such advice as this, the complainant was confounded. Based upon his own representations, and given with intelligence and Christian simplicity, it seemed for a moment unanswerable.

But at length recovering himself, he resumed the discussion. "Music is an art. Its principles are inviolable."

"So is oratory an art," replied his friend. "Yet we all admit, in a religious assembly, the principle for which I am pleading. He who would speak to the purpose in a religious assembly, must not only render himself intelligible. He must stand clear from all suspicion of artistic emulation or love of display. Music, in the office of praise, is but another form of verbal enunciation applied to the most solemn words which ever fall from human lips."

"And what would you say in reference to poetry? Would you mar its diction, and violate its imagery, and interrupt the sweet flow of its numbers in accommodation to the public ear?"

"This would not be necessary. But if I were to make poetic selections for public worship, I should choose such pieces as are distinguished for chaste simplicity."

"You would never approve of doggrels."

"Not exactly. Yet if the people were attached to such things, and had connected them intimately with cherished enjoyments and remembrances, I should, for a time at least, be cautious in my interference."

"Painting, as an art, will not admit of such a principle of accommodation."

"Painting is not essential to the maintenance of public worship. If it were so, we should be bound to select just such specimens, among those at hand, as would prove the most available. To begin with the master-pieces of an Angelo, a Titian, or a West, would be preferring taste to spirituality, and gratifying ourselves at the disadvantage of others."

"But—there is something enobling in the arts."

"Not to him who is ignorant of them, especially in the services of the sanctuary."

“Music is intrinsically beneficial.”

“So is painting, so is poetry, and so is oratory. Yet any one of these, when misapplied, may prove injurious to our devotions. The same is true of the misapplications of music. Taste is a valuable thing in religion only when made subservient to spirituality.”

Here the conversation changed, but the brief argument had done its work. Important views had been communicated, and the Bible was found to sustain them. The truth now flashed upon the mind of the complainant, that he had been disproportionately solicitous for the pleasures of refinement in taste. The resolve was formed. He called upon the merchant who was now leader of the choir, and told him that he would waive all points of difference, and lend him his kind and hearty co-operation; for he feared they had both sinned, in thinking more of the manner than of the spirit of praise. The merchant was surprised. The acknowledgment was unexpected. The meeting was a melting one. The two brethren wept, and confessed, and prayed together. Thenceforward, in the work of improvement, they went hand in hand; and the progress of skill, of taste, and of spirituality, soon became manifest. There was no more trouble. Information increased. Right views of responsibility were inculcated; and the music of the choir became remarkably fine and impressive as an instrument of devotion.

Many a choir and congregation at the present time might derive a useful lesson from the preceding sketch. Artistic influences are too liable to take the place of better things.

XXI.

TASTE IMPROVES BUT SLOWLY.

“Owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong design.”—COWPER.

FEW villages, in this Western world, are more pleasantly situated than that of H——. It lies on the margin of a broad and beautiful lake, whose crystal waters are seldom bound by the hand of winter. The situation is remarkably fine, and the surrounding scenery delightful. The village is distinguished for intelligence, wealth, and refinement, and contains many noble residences. In its earlier days, it was noted for the excellence of its church music. It could then boast of several fine singers, whose performance of psalms, anthems, and motets, at the brick church, were unequalled among the neighboring villages. And what was still better, these individuals were professors of religion, and they always delighted to shed around them the influences of evangelical piety.

Most of the congregation at that time, however, were comparatively indifferent to the music, and ignorant of the labor and expense which were required in sustaining it. It was skilful, and they praised it. It became popular among men of taste, and they were gratified with its high reputation. But they did not seem to appreciate it, either as worshippers or amateurs. Its most interesting features were lost to them ; and they were

deaf to its most impassioned appeals. They were also very backward as to pecuniary appropriations. All this was a serious drawback upon the enjoyments of the choir ; yet the latter waited patiently in the hope of better things to come.

The choir became famous for its well-ordered arrangements, its sound principles, and its excellent performances, and they greatly enjoyed the singing as a devotional exercise. Rehearsals were usually conducted in a Christian manner ; and from time to time, individuals who attended them from motives of taste, would find there "the pearl of great price," and become professors of religion. This was encouraging. To be admitted among the members of such a choir was an enviable privilege. For it was a place of much personal enjoyment ; and the blessing of God was descending upon it.

But the anticipated improvement among the people was long delayed. Taste, as a general thing, was making no progress ; and there was very little advance in pecuniary appropriations. This was trying. It seemed unaccountable. "What dulness ! What insensibility ! What narrowness of policy in musical matters !" But it was useless to complain. The people did their duty in other respects ; and in a more general point of view might be regarded as liberal and enterprising. Could it be that their want of taste was the result of physical or mental disabilities ?

Several years had elapsed, and a change was now approaching ; but not such a one as had been fondly anticipated. The chorister, on whom so much had depended, was called to some distant part of the country ; and no one had been prepared to take his place. The person who now temporarily officiated was regarded as incompetent. Several of the leading singers, one by one, were vacating their seats ; some by removals from the place, some by death, and some through discouragement. Then

was the time for efficient action among the church and people : but nothing would rouse them. "Singing," they said, "would sometimes decline ; and afterward have its seasons of revival." "This was to be expected." The subject, therefore, excited little concern ; and nothing was done to prevent the most rapid deterioration of the music. The singing had prospered many years, with little aid from the congregation ; and now it was destined to a protracted decline. The cause of the decline was not fully understood. It was attributed wholly to the loss of their remarkable chorister. Yet other choristers might have been obtained, who, though less self-denying in their efforts, would have been competent to sustain the music and lead onward to farther improvement. This measure was suggested by the singers ; but it would be attended with some trouble ; and would require larger pecuniary appropriations than had been usual. So the measure was abandoned. The declension was rapid. A few fitful exertions, occasionally put forth, were insufficient to stay its downward course ; and in a few years the music became as remarkable for its rudeness, as it formerly had been for its skill and refinement.

But, at length, there was a general dissatisfaction. The choir were disbanded, and the singing quietly assumed the congregational form. Many sitting in the assembly, had at some former time been members of the choir. Accustomed so long to sing from principle as personal worshippers, they would not now sit in silence. Their feelings of taste were violated, but they would fall in with the majority, and do their utmost in aid of the new arrangement. The experiment for awhile succeeded nobly. Tunes which were plain and simple, and which all could attempt to sing, were introduced with new effect. Taste had levelled down to so low a grade, that the dullest of the dull could begin to enjoy the exercise. The people awoke from

their long period of indifference, and "improved their privilege." The singing seemed eminently devotional. The minority who had taste, were not a little disquieted by the jargon ; but they sung on, courageously, in self-defence, hoping for ultimate relief from some unseen cause.

When the novelty of the arrangement had expended itself, it became evident to all that instruction was needed. Rehearsals were appointed, but the worst singers would not find it convenient to attend. A school was opened for the entire congregation, but most of the seats were unoccupied. Children were benefited, and a few who had once been singers regained in some measure what they had lost by neglect of practice. This rather made the case worse. And as the singing was still deteriorating, there seemed little encouragement for continuing the school. Meanwhile, the badness of the music became a general subject of remark. Once, by its excellence, it drew people "under the sound of the gospel," many of whom would be spiritually benefited ; now it had the opposite tendency of driving people away. The congregation, too, had on this account lost several of its valued members. At some former time, the house of worship had been so crowded, that there were serious thoughts of colonizing for a second church ; now, so many had gone to other denominations, that individuals could not be spared for such a purpose. All this was attributed to the influence of bad singing. One good thing, however, was effected. The former neglecters of the art had acquired an important habit, that of employing their own voices in the praises of God. The style of their singing was sufficiently bad, as might be imagined, after so many years of entire neglect ; but, now they were personally enlisted into the service, and were beginning to enjoy some of its pleasant influences. This, on the whole, was an important point gained ; for persons who

would become interested in a good cause, should have something to do in its promotion.

But the bad singing could not be long endured. The people grew ashamed of it. Before one year had elapsed under the new arrangement, it became evident that a choir was necessary. Rehearsals and schools had failed, and no other remedy could be devised to stay the progress of deterioration. A man of little skill and of moderate standing in the community, was employed for this purpose, who drew around him a few individuals of a similar class, and lead them, after a few rehearsals, into the deserted seats of the gallery. But what a choir! They had no taste, and but little skill. Their singing was mere burlesque compared with that of the other choir, which was still remembered by people of taste. Yet, though such performances could affect little improvement, they kept the music for awhile from deteriorating as rapidly as it had done while there was only congregational singing. In a year or two another chorister was appointed, whose talents were a grade higher. His charges were moderate, but his labors were unsatisfactory. Having neither piety, nor polish of manners, nor general information, his efforts were beneficial chiefly to children and to adults of his own class in society. The choir became enlarged as to numbers, and began to act with some success upon the singing below. The old members of the former choir were sorry for this. They had anticipated a very different result; and might now probably have to wait some years longer before the people would "come to their senses." The improvement, however, was too slow to give general satisfaction. Unfavorable comparisons began to be made in the surrounding villages, between the present and the former choir, which were not to be patiently endured. The present choir was not what it should be. It ought to be larger and more effective.

It should be made respectable and influential, as in former years. Another movement was made, when, by the liberality of the people, a man of excellent talent was employed, on a salary which enabled him to give as much time to the subject of instruction as might be desirable. Improvement became rapid and substantial. Large classes of children and of adults were thoroughly instructed. The choir increased in numbers and respectability, and improved in skill, till the voices of the congregation were completely under their control. Bad execution had chiefly disappeared under the hand of culture; and many of the people could now lift up their voices in connection with the choir, to their own comfort, without injury to the performances. Taste had taken deep root among the people; and all classes were pleased and benefited. Liberality increased, till there was no want of funds. The singing continued to improve both in manner and spirit; and there was no longer any ground to complain of musical unsusceptibility or religious indifference in the exercises of praise. Never before had the exercises seemed so delightful or so uniformly impressive. Arrangements now became permanent. The people were of one mind upon the subject; and once more their example gave tone to church music amid the surrounding villages, accompanied everywhere with spiritual blessings.

What was the cause of that sad and long-continued declension? The singers of the former choir were conscientious, self-denying, persevering, and spiritual. They endeavored to discharge their whole duty, so far as they could ascertain it, in the fear of God; and they doubtless met with His gracious acceptance. They were never once at strife among themselves, or unmindful of the interests of the people. They were patient when treated with neglect; and were seldom unduly elated by commendation. They felt their responsibility as Christian wor-

shippers, while leading the devotions of others in the house of God. Such a choir, so talented, so intelligent, so faithful, and so persevering, had rarely been found. They ought, doubtless, to have been better sustained by the kind attention and liberality, and co-operation of the people; and more especially so at that trying crisis, when their excellent chorister was withdrawn from them. It was due to them. The expectation of such support was perfectly natural.

But, on the other hand, that choir, like many a similar assemblage at the present period, overlooked a very important principle in their practical operations. Instead of regarding the lack of taste, and conception, and musical feeling among the people, as an incurable evil, to be endured with Christian patience, they should have devised some other remedy than that of the extremest process of superinduction. Such a process, in matters of taste, was never yet known to succeed. People may be gradually lead, as their experience and observation have time to ripen; but they can never be hurried blindly onward in paths of musical improvement and susceptibility.

The reaction was inevitable. It might from the first have been confidently predicted. It had also its advantages. It enabled the people to acquire habits of activity which would ever afterwards prove beneficial. It enabled them to begin at the foundations of taste, and build gradually upward. They were then learning important lessons in the school of experience; and would at length become personally interested and liberal in sustaining the music of the church. Once they looked upon the performances as upon classical speeches in a dead language, and were willing the declaimers should pay for their own learning, as being the persons chiefly benefited. But they now could feel the influence of what was sung, and understand its importance. They realized at length the true value of church music,

in their own rich experience. Thenceforward there could be no difficulty. The latter choir stood on a strong and permanent basis. They enlisted the taste and sympathy of the people. When they performed anything which was difficult, the people sat as gratified, intelligent listeners, and when the latter united their voices, they were found to do so with increasing skill and discrimination. This led the people to prize more highly the advantages of instruction; and now as they become dissatisfied with their own utterances, they will either seek for improvement, or consent to sit as silent worshippers.

The reaction, as we have seen, had its evils as well as its advantages. They were protracted and painful, and in some aspects, permanently injurious to the interests of the congregation. All these might have easily been prevented by the first choir, if they had better understood the necessity of consulting the actual susceptibilities of the people.

XXII.

NECESSITY OF GOOD LEADERS.

"O'er the side stops his awkward fist he flings."—CAWTHORNE.

THE old stone church in the densely-populated town of N——, which lies in the vicinity of the wildest mountain scenery, has always been remarkable as the abode of pure orthodoxy and Christian activity. The choir of that church, from the earliest organization, embraced right views of duty, and endeavored faithfully to maintain them in all their rehearsals and performances. Among the members were some of the pillars of the church, whose influence was greatly beneficial. If the choir would sometimes by ill habits or associations, be diverted from the strictest rules of Christian decorum, they would soon be led to restrain their wanderings. They were easily reclaimed and kept in the path of duty. They were remarkable for unanimity and kind feeling. They knew nothing of those petty bickerings and jealousies which so often arise in the absence of Christian principle. They were happy among themselves, and were well sustained by the good feeling and liberality of the congregation.

But nothing in this world is perfect. The best organizations cannot always exclude trouble. The troubles in the choir of the Stone Church were occasioned by leaders, who, though good

men, were, as musicians, incompetent to sustain the responsibilities they assumed.

The first one who officiated was not destitute of skill, but he was afflicted with partial deafness. His drillings would do more towards strengthening the voices than keeping them in tune. He was zealous as he should have been in promoting vocal delivery; but making his own ear the criterion of the utterances, he rendered the harsh elements of the consonants too painfully prominent. The whistling of sibilants, the puffing of aspirates, and the muttering and murmuring of other elements, were so extreme as to fatigue the singers, and mar the beauty of the language. The enunciation was labored and rough. These difficulties were sufficiently regretted, but as no better leader was at hand, they were endured for several years, although a hinderance to the progress of taste, and a blight upon the susceptibilities of Christian enjoyment. At length they felt compelled to look for and obtain a new chorister.

He was not afflicted with deafness; but the loudness of his tones in speech and in song would suffice almost to bring that affliction upon others. He was not remarkable for modest reserve. He was always ready to "show off" his small amount of knowledge for the benefit of those around him; and he had a dogmatical way of doing it, that was quite ridiculous. He was greatly scandalized by "the hissing, and buzzing, and wheezing" of the singers. They could "nunciate well enough, without so much fuss with the letters." He would have them "always mind the beat, and keep time"—"right up to the mark"—"mind the *legater* and *stacater*"—"put on the swell and diminish"—"short at the small rests"—&c., breaking in with the words of command in loud potentials, amidst the strains of the practice-room, as if he had been a militia captain on a day of general muster. This method was so habitual with him,

that he could not wholly refrain himself upon the Sabbath. The singers, he said, were people who knew how to sing with the Spirit, and he would "be on the look-out for style." So the hymns in the seasons of worship would be continually accompanied by his hackneyed potentials, in audible whisperings, just as if drilling and devotion were congenial exercises.

We are aware that, in every act of social worship, some attention must be paid to manner. This is needful for the benefit of all who are present. But while singing in the solemn assembly, the needed suggestions should be more like the self-promptings which arise in prayer, than like the dictations of the class-room. The latter would be decidedly out of place. This, however, was a distinction too minute for the apprehension of the enterprising leader. He was "bound to be thorough." "Every one," he said, "must have his own way, or he can never work to advantage." The choir submitted, for awhile, to the only alternative; but, as the whisperings grew more troublesome, and began to be complained of by the congregation, a change became indispensable.

The third incumbent was a man of better manners and sounder judgment. His deportment was kind and affable. He knew something of style and adaptation, and though gentle in spirit, was full of energy. He had the ardor of an enthusiast. He was a man of sincere piety, and thought much of promoting right influences; yet he was wanting in discrimination, often mistaking musical sentiments for devotional feeling.

This deficiency was first noticed in the practice-room, where, in connection with the most solemn verbal utterances, his attention would be wholly absorbed by the music. His thoughts were given to the dynamics of the art, rather than to the living spirituality of the consecrated words, which, to the minds of well-trained singers, would instinctively suggest the right ex-

pression. This was a sin of ignorance which created some discomfort. But a farther difficulty was, that, when absorbed in sentiment, he would lose the command of his own voice, singing at once the loudest and the worst of everybody around him. This was sufficiently troublesome at rehearsals, where his practices and precepts would sometimes be sadly at war; but at church it would every now and then destroy all the sweetness and expression of the performances. When apprized of this fault, he would seem to regret it, but said it was natural to him. When his feelings were so much excited, he must sing out. He could not restrain himself. He was not impatient under kind reproof; but he imagined that his habits were incurable, and that they could not prove injurious, to any serious extent. "The choir must not expect too much from their leader." "No one perfect." He was a pleasant man. So they winked at his faults, and finally parted with him reluctantly.

He was succeeded by a man who always sung with power. Dynamics were nothing to him. His tone was reedy and uncultivated. He could "do nothing with diminuendos." His voice must either break or go at full blast. He had no expression; and very limited skill. Every tune would be sung in the same mechanical, stereotyped manner. He loved sacred music, and entertained Christian views respecting it; but this was all. He had no other qualifications as leader. The singers were seriously incommoded; and during the year of his services the style rapidly declined.

The next leader was a remarkable man. He was not wanting in skill or susceptibility. He had more talent and discrimination, and more tact in management, than either of his predecessors. He had also too much discernment to mistake musical enthusiasm for religious feeling. Through his exertions the singing soon revived. He secured a good style of vocal

delivery, brought the choir to be good timists, and lead them to sing with more taste and better expression. But, unfortunately, he was of an irritable temperament, and at times was greatly deficient in self-control. This was a constant source of solicitude on the part of the choir. They sought to keep him quiet, but did not always succeed.

If the choir were punctual at the rehearsals, and successful in musical practice, he would usually maintain a kind and courteous deportment, and render everything pleasant around him; but if they were at all negligent or unsuccessful, his horizon would be sadly overcast. His "eyes would snap," his speech become hurried and gruff, and his mutterings as stern and unmusical as distant thunder. "No use in rehearsals"—"always late"—"learn nothing"—"sing worse and worse"—"always out of time"—"out of tune"—"no expression"—"too bad"—"no business to sing so"—"no use in trying to lead such a choir"—"always something out of joint." This habit had become second nature to him. Even at church he would not always refrain himself. If the singers by any means failed to please him, he would grumble in hurried pianissimos between the stanzas, if not in the midst of a tune—"too careless"—"no business to sing so"—"miserable expression"—"no use in trying"—"sing as you will"—"won't lead such a choir"—"I'll be off when my time is out."

At other times, the leader was "everything that could be desired." He was kind and condescending. He sang with peculiar sweetness and emotion. He led the music with becoming solemnity, and appeared deeply devout and sincere. It was then a great privilege to be near him. Yet the singers were afraid of displeasing him, for when thrown off from his balance, there was "no living with him," till an equilibrium could be restored. He knew his infirmity, and regretted it deeply, sometimes

with tears. But he would not seem to be the same man in the two circumstances; nor had he precisely the same conscience. When sorely vexed, the evil was of course imputed to the singers. They had justly offended him; and he was giving them a merited rebuke. It was right that he should be a thorn in their side to stir them up to duty. It was only when the paroxysm was over, that the subject would appear to him in its proper light.

After all, he was an interesting man, and the singers loved him. They pitied his infirmity, and would take no offence at his occasional abuse. The singing improved, and became truly excellent. It was often connected with rich enjoyment, while the leader was in his better mood. But his "tantrums" were increasing in frequency, and the dreaded paroxysms were growing more severe, till they assumed somewhat the appearance of partial insanity. Some suspected him of inebriety; but it was difficult to substantiate such a charge in days when moderate drinking was countenanced. Probably there was not much ground for the imputation. But the injurious suspicion put a period to his usefulness, and at the close of his second year the appointment was not renewed.

The next leader was an entirely different man. He was "an easy, good-natured soul." Everything went well with him. He had skill and discrimination as a singer; but as a leader, he manifested little energy. He had no tact or shrewdness in management. He seemed to be one of those good men who just keep the breath of life within them, but have little industry, courage, and enterprise. He sung rather languidly, drilled but little in the practice-room, and always led on the Sabbath as if he was following at the dictation of the singers. He was liable to be drowsy in sermon time, especially after "a hearty dinner," and would often be "caught napping" when the hymn

was given out from the desk. Of course, he was no leader. The music went as if self-directed; and before the year's engagement closed, was sensibly declining.

But what was now to be done? Six different leaders had been tried, not one of whom had failed to become a serious drawback upon the religious enjoyments. The experiments had been tried for a sufficient term of years to show that some different plan should be adopted. Some were now in favor of giving the whole direction to an organist; but where would they find a suitable man? Others said that musicians are always troublesome; and that few among them had much energy of mind. Those were slanders, the mere offspring of prejudice. Others still, insisted that choirs were always getting into trouble; and that no plan of management could long succeed. These were mistakes; too many examples of comfort and stability could then be adduced. At length, the true secret was discovered. Choristers should be thoroughly instructed and trained for their employment, and then, if they require it, be paid for their services. A liberal annuity was at once subscribed. A man every way qualified for this position was secured; and from that day forward, the troubles of the choir at the Stone Church were at an end.

Few congregations in the country are willing to incur the expense of hiring a talented leader. Nor will this always be necessary. Children should be universally instructed in the rudiments of music; and in every adult singing-school some one or more individuals may easily receive special training as leaders. This plan has been attended with happy results.

XXIII.

A CHOIR CONVERTED.

“Search me and try me.”—DAVID.

THE late Rev. Mr. B——, though a good pastor, and a successful preacher, was extravagantly fond of literature and the arts. He listened to a fine piece of music, just as if he was examining the masterly productions of the pencil or the chisel, and he thought no more of the artists in the one case than he did in the others. In this respect, his views did not differ from those of the multitude around him. The church of C——, of which he was pastor, regarded the music of the choir as a necessary concomitant of spiritual worship, but not as a direct and solemn expression of devotion. The young people, therefore, had always been allowed to conduct the singing according to their own notions of propriety. No member of the choir was distinguished for piety, and there was little feeling of religious obligation regarding the office of praise. But, as the pastor was fond of music, he would often be present at the rehearsals, and close the exercises with “a few words of prayer.” The singers were gratified with this attention. The pastor’s affectionate spirit, his polished and condescending manners, together with his quick appreciation of everything tasteful in their performances, had completely won their affections. They loved

him, and were ever ready to follow his advice. They were remarkably united. They knew no troubles. But they were fully conscious of the possession of skill, and when the pastor commended them for their improvement, they felt as if they had been more successful than might have been expected. They were doing a great work. They were sustaining an important portion of the religious services in a very creditable manner. Instead of looking inward at the actual state of their affections, they cast their eyes upon the worshippers before them, to feast upon their smiles of approbation. They did not pretend to be worshippers, but fine music was so useful and so delightful, that even the eye of Heaven, they thought, could not look upon it with indifference.

Was there anything wrong in the taste of the beloved pastor? He was tenderly alive to the spiritual interests of his people. Objects of taste have their advantage, even to the Christian. In the teachings of one who could not err, we are referred to the beauties of nature, as worthy of admiration; and we may delight in the flowers of the field, and the lilies of the valley, without inquiring what unsightly objects beneath the surface of the soil may have contributed to the vigor and beauty of their appearance. And we often go to the exhibitions of human art with similar feelings. What is it to us for the moment, whether a Madonna, a landscape, or a statue, has been produced by a holy or a sinful man? It is the *artist*, not the man we admire. We are astonished at his powers, and are tempted almost to award to him the honors of an apotheosis. And when listening to an oratorio, the object is to enjoy as we may, the wonderful skill of the composer, and the fine talents of the performers. And we can be gratified with these exhibitions of art, without inquiring into the private character of those to whom we feel so much indebted for our gratification.

If everything appears decent and orderly, and if public scandal has not set its mark upon any of the individuals before us, we inquire no farther. We feast ourselves with the entertainment ; and fancy, perhaps, that persons who sing sacred music so sweetly, must have "the root of the matter" within them.

It was precisely thus with the pastor in reference to the performances of the choir. Scarcely an individual among the members was a professor of religion, or at all remarkable for seriousness of deportment. But all were decent and orderly in their behaviour, and they sung with remarkable sweetness and taste. Many people of high standing residing in that place, had thrown their influence into the choir, and given it permanence and respectability. The selections of psalmody were from the best sources, and all were gratified with the excellence of the performances. And who could tell ? Many who sung so expressively the great themes of salvation, might, after all, have the breath of spiritual life within them, though they knew it not, or were too timid about making the acknowledgment. At a concert, or at an oratorio, when the express object was amusement, the pastor had often felt the kindlings of Christian susceptibility, but on the Sabbath, this experience had been more uniform and satisfactory, in connection with the songs of praise ; while the choir would appear to sympathize with him in his hallowed susceptibilities, as if they really understood them. Here, at least, he imagined there was ground of hope. Church music is of heavenly origin. It is intended as a means of grace ; and how easy would it be for the divine Spirit to add his converting and sanctifying influences, where there was so much preparatory work ! True, he was grieved at the worldliness of the singers, but even professors of religion are sometimes ensnared by the world. The choir would absent themselves from the weekly lecture ; yet this might be owing to the

miserable singing of the worshippers, which he himself could never enjoy. Their taste was offended, and absence was their only remedy. Many of the church would be influenced by considerations which were less excusable. On the whole, he would "hope for the best;" and he doubted not, that sooner or later, he would see many of the singers come out from the world, and unite themselves with the people of God.

As years passed on, musical taste was increasing and extending itself. Associations were formed for its promotion. Splendid organs were procured for the churches. Concerts were given for the public gratification. On these occasions, being often called upon, the pastor of the C—— church would prepare himself for a brief lecture, drawn chiefly from the annals of taste. As a Christian minister, he was bound to say, that God required the homage of the heart in the offerings of praises. But, while he freely admitted this, he would not press the conscience very strongly in such seasons of amusement. He would speak like the artist and the amateur, as if there were something of heavenliness in the art itself, which might lead the singers ultimately to feel as they should do, on the great subject of religion. This hope, so comfortable to the speaker, would sometimes reveal itself in moments of inadvertency. The singers were quick to discover it. There was little probing of the conscience in this matter, and many an impenitent one, it is feared, went on, singing himself, as he imagined, into the ultimate privileges of a Christian immortality, but was destined to be disappointed.

The choir became famous for talent and respectability; but the pastor's hope of spiritual blessing was long deferred. At length he was removed to another field of labor, and succeeded by one whose views of church music were more evangelical. The latter was a wise and devoted pastor, ready, in the apos-

tolie sense, to become "all things to all men," that he might be the means of their salvation. He was fond of music. He attended schools and rehearsals, as often as might be consistent with other engagements; but he had not all the enthusiasm which had been manifested by his predecessor. The singers noticed this with regret. They thought him lamentably deficient. It was true that he prayed for them with earnestness; but he seldom complimented their skill, or said anything which was encouraging to self-esteem. He evidently enjoyed the music, and his personal attentions were sufficiently kind; but why was he so sparing in his commendations?

The truth was, he saw that self-esteem must be undermined or it would prove ruinous. It could never lead to repentance or faith in Christ. He could not trust, for one moment, to any *inherent* heavenliness of the music. The religious influences of the art in public worship, he thought, must depend on the consecrated purposes of the performers. This was evidently Paul's view of the subject; and what could there be in the progress of art which should change the nature of divine precepts? This, he was aware, was not the popular view of the subject; but it was the only view which could be sustained by the Bible. But the new pastor pressed these points wisely. His manner of instruction was gentle and affectionate; and he waited with much patience for the gradual success of truth, against the influence of habits and notions which had been of such long standing. His labors were not in vain. For a time the singers were disheartened. The "new views" might be according to the scriptures, but they were "very discouraging." They would "destroy all ambition." The choir began to grow remiss in their exertions; but conviction had begun its work. It was gaining its hold upon the conscience. A gentle revival of religion ensued. One after another of the singers, ashamed of former heartless-

ness in the service, confessed the delinquency, and consecrated themselves anew with heart and voice, to the solemn work of praising God in the sanctuary. These instances increased in number till a new influence was felt by the choir and congregation; and as the singing again revived, it became as remarkable for spirituality as it formerly had been for artistic excellence. The latter were not now discarded, but they were rendered happily subsidiary to the higher claims of spiritual worship.

The success of such affectionate, patient, faithful dealing, might naturally have been expected. Many examples of the sort have occurred in years that are passed; and many more, we trust, will be witnessed in time to come. Adult singing schools and choir rehearsals are promising fields for Christian effort. What a pity they are so often neglected.

XXIV.

A LEADER GETTING BEHIND THE AGE.

"Of these things put them in remembrance."—2 TIMOTHY, 2: 14.

FORTY years ago, in one of the inland cities of the East, remarkable chiefly for the virtue and the enterprise of its inhabitants, a congregational church was instituted, a pastor was called, and a noble edifice erected for public worship. An efficient choir were needed to complete the arrangements. A few individuals were ready to volunteer their services for this purpose, if they could be sufficiently sustained as to numbers and influence. But here was a difficulty. Many who could sing well, inclined to shrink from such conspicuity. Ideas of worship had become associated with notions of personal display. What would their associates think of them, if they were to "show off" before such a mixed assembly! At a splendid evening party, they felt no such scruples. They could even covet the privilege of singing at such a time. This was in accordance with the customs of good society; but to stand up with every sort of people to sing psalms at church, was a very different thing. It was not by every one considered respectable. At best, it was not an enviable position; and there could be no harm in refusing the invitation. At first, they were chiefly young ladies who declined the service. Not quite satisfied with their real motives for declining, they invented frivo-

lous excuses, which might serve to shield them against importunity.

There was one gentleman, however, who strongly seconded the views of the ladies, and he began to influence others of his own sex. Somewhere, in his occasional peregrinations, he had seen a large humorous picture of a country choir, executed to the life by some distinguished artist. There stood the awkward personages with open mouths, uplifted hand, and staring eyes, grinning at each other, or stealing glances at the congregation, as if desirous of applause ! The scene was altogether so ridiculous, that he at once decided that no gentleman ought to belong to a choir of singers. He, too, kept his secret, till it was dragged from him by force of argument. But his mind was fixed. Other gentlemen might do as they pleased, but he meant to maintain his ground, and do all he could to sustain the decision of the young ladies.

The pastor understood the position of things, but had not yet committed himself. He was a man of quick discernment ; but though he discovered what might be passing in the minds of some of his people, he kept his secret and prepared for efficient action. With much careful inquiry, he at length obtained a teacher after his own heart ; a man in whom he could fully confide. On the eve of establishing the school, it was fitting that he should address his people on the subject of praise. He knew they had a tender conscience, and he prepared himself accordingly. He gave them no artistic harangue. He indulged in no imaginative speculations, or philosophical inquiries. He spread before them their solemn obligation to sustain the praises of the sanctuary in the best possible manner. The question before his people was not one which might be easily set aside. It was not to be decided by the mere notions of men or the customs of society ; but by the irrevocable decisions of

inspiration. The possession of talent implied obligation. Those were bound to be the most forward in the work who possessed the best qualifications. It would not answer to trifle with such a subject. There was no escape from responsibility. Each individual must settle the question for himself in the fear of God. Praise was a good work. It was the joy of angels and glorified spirits in heaven. If any one imagined that this work was not sufficiently dignified and respectable, let him use his endeavors to make it so. He was the very man who should never be excused. God has said, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me:" and is there no sin in withholding from him the glory which is due to his holy name?

Such a solemn appeal had not been anticipated. The subject was presented in a new and interesting aspect. Conscience was enlightened and quickened. There was shame and blushing on that day; for many who had been the most backward in the enterprise were professors of religion, whose example had been injurious. A second appeal was unnecessary. The school prospered. A large choir was soon formed, embracing the very same individuals who had so determined to excuse themselves. The young gentleman forgot the ludicrous picture, and the young ladies lost all fear of conspicuity. For a year or two, the teacher continued his services as leader of the choir. His ardent piety, his amiable manners, and his intelligence and skill, greatly endeared him to the choir and congregation.

But now that the object had been so happily accomplished, considerations of economy led to a relinquishment of the services of the teacher. The teacher had foreseen this movement; and had trained one of the members of the choir, as far as was practicable, to supply his place. This measure created some dissatisfaction. The singing was beginning very gradually to decline, and there were some appearances of the revival of for-

mer notions. Again the pastor addressed his people on the subject, yet not with his former success ; for, now the novelty of his argument had expended itself, while sophisms and false refuges enabled many to escape from its influence. This would never answer. The beloved teacher must be recalled, and put upon a salary which should make it his interest to become a citizen, and attach himself permanently to the choir and congregation. The measure was carried into effect ; and the arrangement was highly satisfactory. The singing again revived, and continued to prosper. Mr. V—— was not less remarkable for consistent piety than for musical acquirements. His influence was not feeble or temporary. - He maintained his position for more than twenty years before any serious difficulty occurred.

The population of a city is fluctuating ; and there is often an unreasonable fondness for changes in management. The first appearance of dissatisfaction was in reference to the selection of tunes. A class of young people had come into the choir, who were anxious for new music—the newest of the new. The leader would confine himself to the same good old melodies, till many of his singers became wearied and disgusted. To him, these melodies were very precious. For a series of years they had been strongly associated with devotional thoughts and feelings, and scenes of thrilling interest. They were like old, affectionate acquaintances. They were also good tunes, and tunes of high celebrity. How could he cast them aside !

But the new generation of singers thought differently. They had no such cherished remembrances to fall back upon. Mental associations were yet to be formed. And what if the tunes had merit ? They now seemed old, and quaint, and time-worn. " We may have too much, even of a good thing." The leader should have considered the matter more seriously, and have

yielded somewhat to the feelings of his younger associates. It was due to them. Taste is necessarily progressive; and it is impossible to sing well unless our feelings can in some measure be gratified. The leader was conscientious. With a heart full of kindness to individuals, he thought it wrong to be governed by their wishes. He retained their affection; but they felt the disappointment, and were somewhat disheartened. The singing began to decline. There was a heaviness and an appearance of languor among the singers, which attracted general observation.

The second difficulty was occasioned by the introduction of a large and splendid organ. The older members of the choir, accustomed for so many years to a light accompaniment, had learned to enjoy the commingling of sweet voices in melody and harmony, heightened by dynamic varieties of expression. All this was to be lost. The voices were to be overwhelmed and stifled by the deafening appeals of an instrument of resistless power, put into the hands of an artist who was ambitious of display. The leader had foreseen the difficulty, and spoken of it with becoming solicitude. But the people, so long accustomed to leave everything to his management, had themselves acquired no definite information; and now, since the music was seen to be declining, they very naturally inferred that he must be getting behind the spirit of the age. Why should they not be influenced by the example of other churches? They ought to have the best instrument and the best performer in the city. The leader became disheartened. He was losing his influence. Even now, he might have rallied, if he had better understood the position of things. The people would soon become tired of such powerful instrumentation, and consent to some change in favor of vocal effect. This was not foreseen. The old singers left in disgust; and the younger ones formed the majority, as to numbers and influence.

Now, certainly, the selection of tunes should have had some reference to the circumstances, and the wishes of the singers. The latter entertained kind feelings toward their leader, and would have been easily satisfied. But, he was sorely tried. In his perplexity he yielded too little. The organist would have readily sympathized with the leader in his taste for selections; but discovering what kind of people he had to deal with, he sided at once with the singers. The leader soon perceived that the place was becoming too straight for him; and presuming upon the kind feelings of the people, he thought it advisable to tender his resignation. He did so; when to his mortification it was accepted. At first he imagined that his days of usefulness in that department were over; but when he witnessed the misrule and the mismanagement that ensued, he began to anticipate a recall to his former post of duty. In this he was not disappointed. What he had predicted became a matter of history. The people were in trouble: who could extricate them but the excellent Mr. V——? Where was there a wiser counsellor in such matters, or a more efficient man? And where, after all, would they find a more talented leader?

But, unfortunately, for the last twenty years, and ever after the first struggles were over, the entire responsibility had been thrown upon the salaried leader. All care of the singing had been cast upon him. The pulpit had withheld instruction on the subject, till former teachings had been nearly forgotten; and now the pastor, somewhat in years, began to tremble for his own popularity. He could no longer exert himself as formerly. The people would have their own notions. There was a great want of intelligence and unanimity.

The recall of the leader had been so long delayed, as to afford him ample time for consideration. A salary was no object to him. The position would be an unpleasant one. - There would

be no relief from its embarrassments. He could not calculate upon the influence of either pastor or people; for they had called him for the express purpose of extricating themselves from trouble, and casting all their responsibilities upon him. The whole position of things was now unfavorable. Was it his duty to sacrifice his remaining influence, and subject himself to so much discomfort, where there was every probability that he would fail in his efforts? He wisely declined the appointment, and retained his seat in the congregation. It was well that he was a patient and peaceable man. Such repeated changes of management ensued, as might otherwise have rendered him restless and troublesome. Nothing could satisfy the people. There were no contentions. There was, perhaps, no evil-speaking; but there was just that restlessness under the performances which chilled the fervors of devotion. After several long years of endurance, an organist "came into power" who understood vocal effect, and who was himself a sincere and humble worshipper.

Once more, there was order and decency, appropriate skill, and pious susceptibility in the music of that church; and the choir, with a leader of modern taste, and an organist whom they esteemed, could all rejoice together in the exercises of praise.

An important lesson had been given to the people. Had their former leader been decidedly a man of progress, and had he been sustained by the unremitted co-operation of pastor and people, there would have been no re-action, and probably no material decline of interest. But the strong propensity to neglect this subject and shake off responsibility, must always sooner or later occasion disaster. Why should it be otherwise? Will any of the interests of religion be found to thrive under such neglect? The idea is preposterous.

XXV.

A PEEP BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

“And all the men and women merely players.”--POPE.

SOME thirty years ago, choirs that were regardless of religious responsibility, were often left to their own direction as entirely as if they had belonged to separate independent communities. They seemed to be regarded as evils which must be patiently tolerated, or as lawless assemblages incapable of religious culture. No wonder that they should often be in trouble, and bring disgrace upon the congregation that were connected with them. Sometimes, however, the tempter, when they were wicked enough to suit him, would seem to let them alone.

The choir in the E—— church, of one of our oldest cities, may serve as an illustration. It consisted of a few obscure persons, who had more vocal power than taste or sense of decorum. The ample curtains which hid them from the gaze of the assembly kept many unsightly scenes from view. The choir attended to their music, but cared little for the rest of the exercises. They were fond of nuts, and candies, and raisins, and of lemonade. They would be busy with their pencils in “sermon time”—not in taking notes, but in making sketches of things around them. Or they would be marking the blank-leaves of their books with senseless rhymes or rude caricature likenesses; or would be carrying on a humorous correspondence. Whis-

pering, winking, and sly tricks of comicality were common; and when invention was exhausted, they would soothe themselves with refreshing slumbers, like many of the nodding ones below.

Their chorister, the vociferating clerk who led the responses of the people, was a clever man in the Yankce sense of that word; ignorant, ill-bred, and destitute of all dignity. He had not sufficient influence to keep order in the choir, or sufficient self-command always to steer clear of personal entanglements. He thought it a great pity for singers to break the Sabbath, and would sometimes gently remonstrate. But it was plain that he was not inaccessible to temptation; and the choir would contrive to keep him sufficiently implicated to prevent him from exposing their mischief.

On one occasion they went a step further, and induced him in an hour of weakness to become the principal actor. At the close of a State election, in which he had taken a deep interest, every mail was big with important intelligence. During the services, a messenger was sent to the post-office for news of the returns. He came back in the time of prayer, when the clerk-chorister, with book in hand, mingled his loud devotions with his whispering interrogatives. "*Amen!* What is the news from A—— county? What is it from B——? *Amen!* How large did you say was the majority. *Amen!* What is the news from C——? What is it from D? How many? Good! We shall beat them yet. *Amen!* What is the majority in the county of E——, and of F——? Well, I expected that. *Amen!* Are the other counties heard from?" His inquiries were promptly answered, and the dialogue was kept up for his *special benefit*, till the utterance of the final "*Amen!*" when the scene was changed from prayer to praise with about the same evidence of personal devotion.

A man of better principles had taken his seat with the choir that day for the first time. In their zeal to lead the chorister astray, they had not thought of him. He was shocked at the ungodliness of the scene, and lost no time in giving information to the constituted overseer of the church. What was to be done? Must the singers be disbanded? No. Others could not be found to supply their places. "Singers, like organ-pipes, will sometimes be out of tune; they are not regarded as worshippers." Must the clerk-chorister be displaced? Not at all. He has many influential friends. He must be privately reprimanded, and on a promise of amendment be allowed to keep his place. He gave the pledge of good behavior which was required of him; but he was still surrounded with the tempters, who had bound themselves by no such engagement, and who would doubtless continue to lead him astray.

When we look back upon such scenes of unprincipled misbehavior, we wonder that they could ever have been tolerated for an hour. If there had been any real necessity in the case, there might have been some shadow of an apology; and then the utility of choirs might well have been questioned. But how did unprincipled singers gain the ascendancy? Was it not possible for Christians to learn to sing? Or was there really no obligations resting upon them to become active in the praises of God?

XXVI.

OLD FOLKS vs. YOUNG.

“Did read by rote and could not spell.”—SHAKESPEARE.

THERE is an extensive farming district in one of the oldest states of the Union, which was once overrun—not with white daisies, or Canada thistles, but with “Yankee patent-notes.” They operated as a paralysis to musical enterprise, and formed an insurmountable obstacle to the progress of taste.

Good music is not to be obtained without intelligent instruction and practice. But here was a plan of learning to sing without study or labor; of acquiring skill without tasking ingenuity. This plan, like some analogous ones still advocated by superficial thinkers, virtually proposed to help the pupil onward by relieving him from the very kind of effort which was indispensable to sound and thorough progress. Such plans are sure to deceive expectation. They may seem inviting at first, but they give temporary facility at the expense of ultimate perplexity and discouragement. A painter cannot be produced by machinery, nor a poet by a rhyming dictionary. And a musical student who would prosper in his studies, must avoid all analogous contrivances in notation. It is enough for him that the “round-note system” has become the written musical language throughout the civilized world; that this language has been adopted after countless experiments of every name and

nature; and that in it are recorded the whole amount of musical materials of every age and country.

One of the most permanent evils arising from such contrivances is, that they hinder the people from acquiring any satisfactory amount of practical knowledge, and encourage low and limited views of the art. How far the choir in the village church of P——, were influenced by the use of “patent notes,” it is impossible now to ascertain; yet, before they adopted the “round notes,” they had learned to undervalue musical attainments, to be inattentive to instruction, and negligent of effort. They were *not partial* to innovations. It was enough for them that they could read “the old way.” For many years they would not pay sufficient attention to exercises in round notes, to enable them to read the plainest tunes, a thing that might easily have been accomplished in some eight or ten evenings of well-directed practice. With books in hand, they trusted chiefly to memory; and as persons immersed in business, and advanced in years, were among their numbers, there would often occur some painful deficiencies of recollection. Portions of different tunes, through forgetfulness, would be strangely intermingled. A stanza would sometimes commence with one tune and end with another. And every now and then, a tune which “started well,” would “bring up at the middle,” or be converted to a trio or solo before the close. Whenever such occurrences became too frequent for endurance, a school would be opened just long enough to “jog the memory,” as to old tunes, and supply it with some twelve or fifteen new ones. There was no increase of skill, or progress in refinement.

At one time a small list of tunes was given into the hands of the teacher, which, when committed to memory by the choir, would be a signal for his dismissal. At another time the teacher was employed for the purpose of initiating one of the

singers into the office of chorister, who needed special training. As soon as the latter could "beat the time, and give the pitch with accuracy," and learn to be governed by the general movement of those around him, the task was accomplished, and there was an end to instruction till another exigency should occur.

This was a fair specimen of the management which prevailed in the surrounding villages. Schools were unfrequent, and of short duration, and weekly rehearsals for mutual improvement were then unknown. The people wondered why the singing, after every period of instruction, should so rapidly decline. The benefit of instruction, they said, seemed so small, as scarcely to compensate for the effort and expense attending it. Teachers, therefore, would be poorly paid, and they had little inducement to become better qualified for their employment. There were also some social evils connected with singing schools, which were imagined to be necessary concomitants. So entirely blind were the churches of that district to the course of instruction which the circumstances demanded.

The younger members of the choir in P——, were at length becoming dissatisfied. They were in favor of progress. The teaching was too limited, and too superficial. They desired something better. But they were yet in the minority as to numbers and influence. The older men were efficient singers, and some of them were pillars in the church and congregation. They were quite intelligent on other subjects, and generally speaking, were not behind the age in enterprise. But in music, they insisted on the maintenance of the same narrow-minded policy which had so long been pursued. The truth was, they were so busy in other matters, and so far advanced in life, as to be unwilling to commence any thorough system of musical practice, and thinking very properly that the young people ought not to be wholly left to themselves, they saw no other

alternative than the one which was occasioning dissatisfaction. Their numbers, however, were diminishing, and the time was not far distant when they would be in the minority. Musical improvement cannot, in the nature of things, be impeded without serious injury to the interests of psalmody. The dissatisfaction increased. At length the struggle came on. Neither party would yield its position. Two rival schools were simultaneously established, the one on the usual plan, under charge of a pious, though inefficient teacher; the other, on an improved plan, under a teacher, who, though not a professor of religion, was a skilful man, and a man of sound principles and unexceptionable morals. The former party accused the latter of unworthy motives, which, of course, they wholly disclaimed. A talented, pious teacher, could scarcely then be found; for the churches in that district had long been treating the subject with indifference. The young people had made the best selection in their power. Both schools, however, could not be sustained. So an aged counsellor was called from a neighboring village, to bring about an accommodation. He sought in a private way to reconcile the parties, by admitting to each, that to some extent the other might have been wrong, which was really the truth. But no. Both were inflexible. There was no intention of yielding, and the venerable friend came to the parish meeting which had been appointed, without the least hope of effecting an accommodation. There was a full attendance at the meeting. One thing after another was proposed by individuals, but to no purpose. Both the teachers sent in their resignations, but they were not accepted. The parties grew clamorous. The one, presuming upon their superior influence in the society, forgot the kindness and forbearance which were due to youth; the other were equally forgetful of that deference which was due to age. The irritation increased, and drew forth on either

hand opprobrious epithets, which added fuel to the flame. The meeting became disorderly and clamorous. The venerable visitor, who till then had sat in silence, arose to address the meeting. In a moment all was silence, and breathless expectation.

"My friends," said he, "I am exceedingly distressed for you. I can do you no good." And they saw his chin quiver with emotion, while his eye beamed with unwonted tenderness. "I had thought the *spirit* of praise immeasurably more essential than the *manner*; but to-night all our discussions turn upon externals, while by our impatience and strife, the blessed Spirit has been grieved away from us. We have sought out our own devices, and are in trouble. No doubt the manner of praise has great importance; but when we consider that our God looketh upon the heart, and that he must regard as mockery every sacrifice of praise in which the heart is wanting, the thought is overwhelming! What can I say!" His voice faltered with emotion, for he had a gentle spirit; yet he endeavored to be faithful. "What a scene has been presented here to-night! Who could have believed it? We have been wrangling and quarrelling about the praises of God!! Every one would have been shocked at the bare idea of such proceedings in reference to social prayer. But praise is a heavenly employment. It is the joy of angels and glorified spirits in the presence of God. Is praise to be regarded as an employment, less hallowed, less solemn, less momentous, than that of prayer, which will forever cease as we enter the presence-chamber above! My friends and brethren, I am distressed for you. What can I say! Could we realize the weight of responsibility which is assumed by every ostensible worshipper; could we regard the solemn office of praise as angels regard it, and as God our Saviour regards it, how different would be our feelings, and

motives, and deliberations ! But I must leave you ; I can do you no good."

He would have added more, but could not. For more than three days he had labored among that people with Christian faithfulness ; and such a result had grieved him to the heart. They loved him. They witnessed his emotion ; and when with trembling steps he silently withdrew, there was shame and blushing in that house. All were silent and thoughtful. Not an individual could hold up his head. Nothing farther was offered, and the meeting closed, as by one consent, in perfect silence.

But an impression had been made which was deep and salutary. A conference was held by a committee from the two parties, which led to an accommodation. How much there might have been of mutual acknowledgment and regret, did not so distinctly appear. But, as both parties had been in fault, both were desirous of a reconciliation. The matters in dispute were readily adjusted. The young people should be allowed to have instruction of a thorough character ; and the older members should have the privilege of nominating the individual who should be employed. The arrangement was satisfactory. The proffered resignation of the two teachers was now accepted ; and another teacher was procured, whose services were gratifying to all. He was a talented man ; and understood the delicacy of his position. The school greatly prospered. Both parties had a mind for study. The "round-note system" of notation was soon mastered, so that all could read instead of trusting to treacherous memories. The leading principles of style were so thoroughly inculcated, as not to be easily forgotten ; and the nature of a chorister's work was made familiar to all ; so that in future there would be no want of leaders to "set the psalm." Nor was the *spirit* of praise forgotten. Every evening

bore witness to its presence ; and a conviction of its importance was cherished and deepened by occasional exercises, which were specially designed for its promotion. All these advantages, to the delight of the people, had been gained in a few short months, without any material interference with business transactions ; and now, at the termination of the school, weekly rehearsals were established, which served to prevent the music from declining till a future period of instruction should ensue.

The thorough training which was received, both as to the manner and spirit of praise, formed a new era in the musical history of that village. Thenceforward the singing of that church was distinguished for accuracy, for taste, for good adaptation and expression, and above all for devotional interest. Rehearsals were conducted with Christian propriety, and the performances at church were no longer deficient in power and solemnity. All difficulties were at an end. Unanimity of feeling became permanent. All were now ready to acknowledge the advantage of procuring adequate instruction. The influence of this example was not limited. The successful teacher soon had the pleasure of witnessing the same cheering results in many of the surrounding villages. How important is it, that all efforts relative to the office of praise should be thorough and well directed !

XXVII.

DIFFICULTIES IN A CITY CHOIR.

“There prevail, at present, two kinds of music, as diverse as their origin—profane and religious.”—SAMPSON.

WHY should there be so much difficulty in sustaining church music in our large cities? This important question has been more frequently proposed than satisfactorily answered. Many causes might be mentioned. The mixed character of the population, embracing so many conflicting habits, opinions, and prejudices; the instability of residences; the same individual seldom remaining long in the same locations, or in connection with the same churches; the numberless circumstances which prevent the individuals of a congregation from familiar intercourse with each other; the many counter-attractions which draw away the members of the choir from evening rehearsals; the fickleness of enterprise, and the impatience and the impulsiveness which are incident to city life; and, above all, the strong tide of worldliness which bears away everything before it, extinguishing the fervor of piety and damping the ardor of devotion. These are causes sufficiently numerous, one might think, to account for the multitude of failures; and the mere enumeration will suffice to show that they are not easily overcome.

Various measures have been adopted for the improvement of church music, which have but ill succeeded.

Promiscuous singing in connection with a precentor will of necessity retain its rudeness. Efforts have sometimes been put forth for the instruction of an entire congregation, but few of the people would ever be found at the rehearsals, and the precentor himself would perhaps be foremost among the deserters. Voluntary choirs, artistically trained, have proved too unskilful for the satisfaction of citizens who enjoy so many opportunities of witnessing professional talent. A hired quartet too often become emulous of musical distinction; and a choir partly hired and partly voluntary contains within itself the elements of disunion.

A powerful organ overwhelms the voices of an assembly without benefiting them. It must have an able executant, and the latter perhaps will be too fond of his instrument to observe due moderation. A small instrument neither gives satisfaction in itself, nor keeps the voices in tune. In connection with an undisciplined choir, it is sure to make difficulty. An organist who understands vocal music has occasionally succeeded without a leader in sustaining an efficient choir for a considerable period of time. Yet, he labors under two special disadvantages. His best singers will either virtually become leaders, and retard the progress of improvement, or, acquiring at length some celebrity for skill in execution, they will be "bought off" to supply deficiencies in other choirs.

These various measures are also found to conflict with that general ignorance of such matters which prevails among the influential classes in society. So limited is the information on this entire subject, that the same disastrous experiments will be tried among the different churches a thousand times over, without producing a general increase of practical wisdom.

Let us go back in our illustrations some thirty years, to a large church standing at a corner in N—— street. The people

were of New England descent, accustomed to sing in connection with a choir. But the one which then occupied the gallery was so feeble, so inefficient, and so ill-ordered, as scarcely to deserve the name. Instead of leading in the exercise, they were overpowered by voices below, that would drag at a fearful distance behind time. The sounds that were started in the gallery would come back, not as gentle reverberations, but as clamorous accumulating echoes, overwhelming the tide of song. All parties were dissatisfied, and a school was opened for improvement. A *Professor* appeared as teacher; the people laughed at his ignorance and rusticity. Another teacher succeeds him, who is more competent. But now the people are too much occupied or too indolent to become pupils. The school is a failure. The choir have gained in the person of the teacher an additional voice of some power, but nothing more.

But now, for a change, an organ is introduced into the gallery; it is a small one, insufficient to keep the voices in tune or in time. Still, it occupies so considerable a portion of the room above, as to exclude one half of the singers from their seats. Worse and worse! But "what is the use of voluntary choirs? Let us have a real artist." 'Tis done. Madame Blank takes her station and sings so beautifully that the people sit as listeners in silent admiration of the artist. But the novelty wears off, and they discover that she is far from being devout in her deportment. This will never answer. The curtain falls.

Scene third presents a new interior with an enlarged gallery, a powerful organ, and a numerous choir of fresh volunteers. But the new organ is as much too powerful as the old one was too weak. Hark, how it swells! How the arches ring and the foundations tremble! What a volume of tone—what a tremendous sub-bass! Children are holding their ears, and nerv-

ous women suffer with the headache. The voices of the choir are lost in the depths of the harmony ; and the people below can now "sing as they list" without disturbing each other. But, as Sabbaths pass on, the novelty spends itself. Common sense puts the question : Is this right ? Is it not in fact a mere display of loud instrumentation ? So the Puritans of old would have decided, and so ought their descendants to decide. A general murmuring ensues. The executant must close some of his stops, or relinquish his engagement. He prefers the latter alternative. A new executant plays with becoming moderation. But now the rough accents of the undisciplined choir have become prominent. "What doleful singing ! What miserable voices, ill-toned, nasal, and dental ! What vulgarities in verbal utterance ! What destitution of taste, of feeling, and expression !" The people can neither enjoy the performances of the choir, nor endure their own vociferations. Again the curtain falls.

Scene fourth presents a hired quartet, whose voices are polished, well balanced, and powerful. The parties make no profession of piety. They are amateur personators of devotion. This circumstance, so common in such arrangements, is not regarded by the people as very objectionable. The singers do not even bring out with expression the characteristics which appear in the hymns. This was not expected of them. But they "sing well," lead off manfully, and bring up, per force, the lingering accents of the assembly. The music improves. The organist accompanies with judgment and taste. The good people at last are satisfied ; and the music committee are beginning to bless themselves for having at last hit upon the right expedient. Behold that quartet with pencils in hand ! Are they taking notes of the sermon ? See that small curtain drawn in front of the instrument. Is the organist engaged in serious

meditation? Ah, no! The chief singers are scribbling nonsense in the house of God; and the organist has slipped through a back door for the purpose of sharpening his invention at a porter house! The secret is out, and the people are indignant. Once more the curtain falls.

Scene fifth presents a talented chorister with three hired singers, forming an occasional quartet in the midst of a select choir of volunteers, whose voices have been much improved by instruction and practice. The training has been artistic, and the singers seem equal to the task they have undertaken. They are not worshippers; and are not burdened with profound views of responsibility. The volunteers "intend to sustain the music," and to "gain much credit" by the achievement. The effort seems to prosper. The vocal utterances are distinct and musical. The new organist accompanies delightfully; and the alternation of *sol*i and *tutti* passages in connection with the dynamic renderings of the melody, produce a most charming effect. "What excellent music: the finest in the city! What an effective soprano singer; what a fine alto; what a noble bass; and what a powerful leader!" The people show themselves highly pleased; but, unfortunately, the volunteers do not share in the commendation. They labor gratuitously, while those who receive compensation, gain all the credit of the performances. This is too much to be endured. The volunteers are disappointed and disheartened. They grow restless and impatient, and remiss in their attendance upon rehearsals. They accuse the leader of partiality, and the salaried ones of taking "too many *airs*" upon themselves. This calls forth recriminations. The bitterness of jealousy increases; and ere six months have ended, the malcontents begin to retire from the service in disgust. The people take sides in the controversy. Both parties are blamed; and now that the volunteers have disappeared,

the remaining quartet seem less satisfactory. Popularity ceases, and the scene closes at the end of the year's engagement.

Changes upon changes ensue. Years fly swiftly in a large city. The restless inhabitants are seldom stationary. They go from church to church with the same facility that they change their dwelling places. And now there is another pastor, and virtually another congregation. All remembrance of the earlier arrangements has disappeared with the floating population who have left; and those who have supplied their places, are unwittingly repeating the exploded experiments of earlier times. A few years more, and the people, through some out-breaking weakness in the gallery, are brought to a solemn stand. A public meeting is called. A discussion ensues. The people are divided. Some propose one thing and some another. Deacon Stadtholder arose. He had been a member of that congregation for the last thirty-five years. He recollected all the musical changes which had occurred, and made his comment upon them. Nothing had been stable. Nothing had succeeded since the first abandonment of the congregational method. He had always been opposed to choirs. They never had prospered; and he was now in favor of returning to the good old way.

"But what will become of the people?" said an extensive pew-owner.

"Good music," said one of the trustees, "does much towards filling the pews."

"The people will all be disgusted," said an amateur.

The pastor arose. "There must be some way of sustaining the music in city congregations," said he, "which will be attended with results which are abiding and satisfactory. The subject is properly one of Christian enterprise. Hitherto, in the arrangements, as detailed to-day, it is plain that artistic considerations have taken precedence of devotional ones. This has

been wrong. We need not wonder at the failures which have occurred. Singers should be worshippers. We have no authority for a personated devotion in songs of praise. Such an idea is not contained in the scriptures. In all our arrangements we should remember that God looketh upon the heart. Why should the cultivation of church music be made a matter of mere taste or convenience, or church policy? We ought to be influenced by more weighty considerations. Psalmody must be made a branch of Christian enterprise; and we must engage in it with holy, self-denying, personal activity."

The pastor's appeal was decisive. He presented a new view of the subject, and held it up in such a light, that the people awoke for the first time to a strong conviction of personal accountability. A plan was agreed upon. Influential members in the church were forward in the undertaking. An excellent teacher was provided. Schools and rehearsals were well attended, and rightly conducted; and the pastor was often present to take part in the exercises.

A noble effort was now put forth, which was ultimately to be crowned with success. Progress was slow; for while old habits and prejudices could not at once be overcome; the accelerating influence of artistic motives was withdrawn. Appointments, too, were often frustrated by conflicting engagements. The labor, and discipline, and practice, had been greater than was first anticipated; and the congregation at length were becoming impatient. Many were predicting another failure; and not a few who commenced with ardor, had retired in discouragement.

It was time for some public demonstration. A new choir of fifty singers was organized, who met the congregation with a public rehearsal. The exercises were of peculiar interest to those who were spiritually-minded, though the performances, as all could see, were yet imperfect. Little was *said* against

the music, for much weight of personal character was embarked in the enterprise. There was some whispering among amateurs, and there were knowing ones among artists and professors, who exchanged significant glances, and some two or three ventured to toss their heads in derision. This was hard to be borne. A few of the more timid ones left the choir, and went to other churches, and several of the more affluent grew weary of effort, and left the rehearsals. The interest was beginning to flag. It was a critical moment. A little matter at that time might have defeated the enterprise. But the excellent pastor was unremitting in his exertions, his encouragements, and his prayers, and there were noble Christian spirits in that choir, who were not to be disheartened or intimidated.

The music, through the untiring industry of the singers, began visibly to improve. The people became patient, then attentive, and then more deeply interested. Even while the training was yet imperfect, they began to perceive a wide difference between real and representative devotion. The singing was no longer a subject for carping criticism. The choir were solemn personal worshippers ; the people deeply sympathized with them, and united in the exercises with holy delight. Occasionally they lifted up their own accents in the full chorus of the assembly, with one heart and one voice.

The change thus happily effected, became permanent. The people had learned the right lesson, and troubles were at an end. Thenceforward the choir was easily sustained. Taking a new stand-point of observation, a flood of light was shed over the history of past proceedings. The people concluded that if Christians are to be materially benefited by the songs of Zion, they must make some other sacrifices than those of a pecuniary nature. They must be conversant with the subject, and prepare as individuals to bear some part occasionally in the public

exercises of praise. The object must be infinitely higher than that of mere musical enjoyment, which though the principal source of attraction at concerts, must here be subordinate. Spiritual advantages in the office of praise, must be sought like other blessings, in the way of God's appointment.

And here is the proper solution of the question which has called forth the preceding sketch. It is difficult to sustain church music in large cities, chiefly because so few are willing to make individual efforts and sacrifices, in a truly Christian spirit. Let the people adopt the course which has latterly been pursued by the church in N—— street, and there need be no fear as to results. But if they persist in the toleration of merely artistic motives and arrangements, they must make up their minds to suffer legitimate consequences.

XXVIII.

A TALENTED BUT IMMORAL CHORISTER.

“That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting.”—ST. PAUL.

IN a charming valley, between two lofty ranges of hills, and on either side of a winding stream, that abounds in “water-privileges,” dwell an industrious population, chiefly descendants of New England. The first settlers were from the middling classes in society, active and economical, but more remarkable for good sense, than for sound learning or true refinement. They were a virtuous people. Music was almost their only source of amusement, and during the long winter evenings, they generally sustained an adult singing school.

Some thirty years ago, when “books were scarce and dear,” the teacher would give manuscript lessons for the singers to copy into their blank-books. The best copyists were the most active in “punching off the music,” and those who “punched the most,” were sure to learn the fastest; for being proverbially inquisitive, they were “bound to know” the name and the use of every character which was drawn by their pens. This was a decided advantage, for when books became plenty, the punchers were able to read them.

The violoncello and flute at that early period, were the only accompanying instruments at the village church. The one was frequently too flat, and the other was as often too sharp in ref-

erence to the proper pitch, till there was a fearful odds between them, and the singers were vacillating with reckless instability between the two extremes. At length the flute gave place to the violin, when the instruments, to the great comfort of the singers, were found to "sag together," so as to produce harmony. But this, in the opinion of some, had too much the appearance of "fiddling," and when at length the violin made its appearance at church, the worshippers below were sadly scandalized. The gentleman who led on that instrument, however, was no vocalist, and there was not a chorister to supply his place. What was to be done? After a free consultation, it was satisfactorily arranged, that the "fiddle should always be played wrong end upward." There was more philosophy in this decision than at first appears; for when the instrument stood downward, like a small bass-viol, it no longer brought to mind associations of the ball-room, and the low tavern. Mental associations have great influence in music. Even in these wiser days, when one sees a choir led by two upstanding violinists, with shaking heads and flourishing elbows, he can almost wish for a re-enactment of that old decision.

The choir in the village church continued to prosper till the violinist was succeeded by a vocal leader, who, though a talented man, was suspected of secret immoralities. Probably the suspicions were groundless, but they led some of the best singers to absent themselves from rehearsals and performances. The singers, in consequence, soon acquired such an inveterate "habit of flatting," that uniformly as often as once in two or three stanzas of a psalm or hymn, the "pitch would have to be sounded" anew. This was a sad annoyance, especially in seasons of public worship. Recourse was had to a teacher. The latter, though a man of skill, had never met with such a difficulty. The music seemed uncommonly harmonious, but the

whole choir would sink together by insensible degrees, at the rate of a semi-tone for every stanza. What could be the cause? The scale of nature, when absolutely perfect, has a slight downward tendency, but nothing, when compared with this. The slackening of viol strings will sometimes occasion a gradual depression of the pitch, but not so regular and so constant as the one in question. Nor could the two causes combined, produce so great a practical result.

The teacher was perplexed. He listened again, and again bethought himself. One single error in intonation he had noticed. The seventh of the scale was uniformly turned too high. To correct this interval, he supposed, might aggravate the difficulty; for when all the intervals were sinking at such a rate, why should the seventh be farther depressed? But, as every other expedient had failed, he took to task the interval in question, with about as much hope as the sailor had who threw his last cap at the thievish monkeys, and regained through their mimicking those which had been previously stolen. The expedient was successful. Tuning the seventh too high had led the voices uniformly downward. Depressing this one interval to its true relative pitch, prevented the others from sinking; and thus the teacher's task was accomplished.

The solution of this problem is left to the speculative theorist. The experiment may be of use to teachers and choristers. The exercises were all in the major scale. Tuning the third and fourth of that scale a little too high, has usually an upward tendency, while a similar elevation of the seventh interval leads to a gradual depression of the pitch. As these faults are more or less prevalent among vocalists, they may be considered as the chief cause of instability in the pitch.

But there is a more important chapter in the history of this choir. Talent improved. Taste became refined. As years

motives, and deliberations! But I must leave you; I can do you no good."

He would have added more, but could not. For more than three days he had labored among that people with Christian faithfulness; and such a result had grieved him to the heart. They loved him. They witnessed his emotion; and when with trembling steps he silently withdrew, there was shame and blushing in that house. All were silent and thoughtful. Not an individual could hold up his head. Nothing farther was offered, and the meeting closed, as by one consent, in perfect silence.

But an impression had been made which was deep and salutary. A conference was held by a committee from the two parties, which led to an accommodation. How much there might have been of mutual acknowledgment and regret, did not so distinctly appear. But, as both parties had been in fault, both were desirous of a reconciliation. The matters in dispute were readily adjusted. The young people should be allowed to have instruction of a thorough character; and the older members should have the privilege of nominating the individual who should be employed. The arrangement was satisfactory. The proffered resignation of the two teachers was now accepted; and another teacher was procured, whose services were gratifying to all. He was a talented man; and understood the delicacy of his position. The school greatly prospered. Both parties had a mind for study. The "round-note system" of notation was soon mastered, so that all could read instead of trusting to treacherous memories. The leading principles of style were so thoroughly inculcated, as not to be easily forgotten; and the nature of a chorister's work was made familiar to all; so that in future there would be no want of leaders to "set the psalm." Nor was the *spirit* of praise forgotten. Every evening

bore witness to its presence ; and a conviction of its importance was cherished and deepened by occasional exercises, which were specially designed for its promotion. All these advantages, to the delight of the people, had been gained in a few short months, without any material interference with business transactions ; and now, at the termination of the school, weekly rehearsals were established, which served to prevent the music from declining till a future period of instruction should ensue.

The thorough training which was received, both as to the manner and spirit of praise, formed a new era in the musical history of that village. Thenceforward the singing of that church was distinguished for accuracy, for taste, for good adaptation and expression, and above all for devotional interest. Rehearsals were conducted with Christian propriety, and the performances at church were no longer deficient in power and solemnity. All difficulties were at an end. Unanimity of feeling became permanent. All were now ready to acknowledge the advantage of procuring adequate instruction. The influence of this example was not limited. The successful teacher soon had the pleasure of witnessing the same cheering results in many of the surrounding villages. How important is it, that all efforts relative to the office of praise should be thorough and well directed !

XXVII.

DIFFICULTIES IN A CITY CHOIR.

"There prevail, at present, two kinds of music, as diverse as their origin—profane and religious."—SAMPSON.

WHY should there be so much difficulty in sustaining church music in our large cities? This important question has been more frequently proposed than satisfactorily answered. Many causes might be mentioned. The mixed character of the population, embracing so many conflicting habits, opinions, and prejudices; the instability of residences; the same individual seldom remaining long in the same locations, or in connection with the same churches; the numberless circumstances which prevent the individuals of a congregation from familiar intercourse with each other; the many counter-attractions which draw away the members of the choir from evening rehearsals; the fickleness of enterprise, and the impatience and the impulsiveness which are incident to city life; and, above all, the strong tide of worldliness which bears away everything before it, extinguishing the fervor of piety and damping the ardor of devotion. These are causes sufficiently numerous, one might think, to account for the multitude of failures; and the mere enumeration will suffice to show that they are not easily overcome.

Various measures have been adopted for the improvement of church music, which have but ill succeeded.

Promiscuous singing in connection with a precentor will of necessity retain its rudeness. Efforts have sometimes been put forth for the instruction of an entire congregation, but few of the people would ever be found at the rehearsals, and the precentor himself would perhaps be foremost among the deserters. Voluntary choirs, artistically trained, have proved too unskilful for the satisfaction of citizens who enjoy so many opportunities of witnessing professional talent. A hired quartet too often become emulous of musical distinction; and a choir partly hired and partly voluntary contains within itself the elements of disunion.

A powerful organ overwhelms the voices of an assembly without benefiting them. It must have an able executant, and the latter perhaps will be too fond of his instrument to observe due moderation. A small instrument neither gives satisfaction in itself, nor keeps the voices in tune. In connection with an undisciplined choir, it is sure to make difficulty. An organist who understands vocal music has occasionally succeeded without a leader in sustaining an efficient choir for a considerable period of time. Yet, he labors under two special disadvantages. His best singers will either virtually become leaders, and retard the progress of improvement, or, acquiring at length some celebrity for skill in execution, they will be "bought off" to supply deficiencies in other choirs.

These various measures are also found to conflict with that general ignorance of such matters which prevails among the influential classes in society. So limited is the information on this entire subject, that the same disastrous experiments will be tried among the different churches a thousand times over, without producing a general increase of practical wisdom.

Let us go back in our illustrations some thirty years, to a large church standing at a corner in N—— street. The people

were of New England descent, accustomed to sing in connection with a choir. But the one which then occupied the gallery was so feeble, so inefficient, and so ill-ordered, as scarcely to deserve the name. Instead of leading in the exercise, they were overpowered by voices below, that would drag at a fearful distance behind time. The sounds that were started in the gallery would come back, not as gentle reverberations, but as clamorous accumulating echoes, overwhelming the tide of song. All parties were dissatisfied, and a school was opened for improvement. A *Professor* appeared as teacher; the people laughed at his ignorance and rusticity. Another teacher succeeds him, who is more competent. But now the people are too much occupied or too indolent to become pupils. The school is a failure. The choir have gained in the person of the teacher an additional voice of some power, but nothing more.

But now, for a change, an organ is introduced into the gallery; it is a small one, insufficient to keep the voices in tune or in time. Still, it occupies so considerable a portion of the room above, as to exclude one half of the singers from their seats. Worse and worse! But "what is the use of voluntary choirs? Let us have a real artist." 'Tis done. Madame Blank takes her station and sings so beautifully that the people sit as listeners in silent admiration of the artist. But the novelty wears off, and they discover that she is far from being devout in her deportment. This will never answer. The curtain falls.

Scene third presents a new interior with an enlarged gallery, a powerful organ, and a numerous choir of fresh volunteers. But the new organ is as much too powerful as the old one was too weak. Hark, how it swells! How the arches ring and the foundations tremble! What a volume of tone—what a tremendous sub-bass! Children are holding their ears, and nerv-

ous women suffer with the headache. The voices of the choir are lost in the depths of the harmony ; and the people below can now "sing as they list" without disturbing each other. But, as Sabbaths pass on, the novelty spends itself. Common sense puts the question : Is this right ? Is it not in fact a mere display of loud instrumentation ? So the Puritans of old would have decided, and so ought their descendants to decide. A general murmuring ensues. The executant must close some of his stops, or relinquish his engagement. He prefers the latter alternative. A new executant plays with becoming moderation. But now the rough accents of the undisciplined choir have become prominent. "What doleful singing ! What miserable voices, ill-toned, nasal, and dental ! What vulgarities in verbal utterance ! What destitution of taste, of feeling, and expression !" The people can neither enjoy the performances of the choir, nor endure their own vociferations. Again the curtain falls.

Scene fourth presents a hired quartet, whose voices are polished, well balanced, and powerful. The parties make no profession of piety. They are amateur personators of devotion. This circumstance, so common in such arrangements, is not regarded by the people as very objectionable. The singers do not even bring out with expression the characteristics which appear in the hymns. This was not expected of them. But they "sing well," lead off manfully, and bring up, per force, the lingering accents of the assembly. The music improves. The organist accompanies with judgment and taste. The good people at last are satisfied ; and the music committee are beginning to bless themselves for having at last hit upon the right expedient. Behold that quartet with pencils in hand ! Are they taking notes of the sermon ? See that small curtain drawn in front of the instrument. Is the organist engaged in serious

meditation? Ah, no! The chief singers are scribbling nonsense in the house of God; and the organist has slipped through a back door for the purpose of sharpening his invention at a porter house! The secret is out, and the people are indignant. Once more the curtain falls.

Scene fifth presents a talented chorister with three hired singers, forming an occasional quartet in the midst of a select choir of volunteers, whose voices have been much improved by instruction and practice. The training has been artistic, and the singers seem equal to the task they have undertaken. They are not worshippers; and are not burdened with profound views of responsibility. The volunteers "intend to sustain the music," and to "gain much credit" by the achievement. The effort seems to prosper. The vocal utterances are distinct and musical. The new organist accompanies delightfully; and the alternation of *sol*i and *tutti* passages in connection with the dynamic renderings of the melody, produce a most charming effect. "What excellent music: the finest in the city! What an effective soprano singer; what a fine alto; what a noble bass; and what a powerful leader!" The people show themselves highly pleased; but, unfortunately, the volunteers do not share in the commendation. They labor gratuitously, while those who receive compensation, gain all the credit of the performances. This is too much to be endured. The volunteers are disappointed and disheartened. They grow restless and impatient, and remiss in their attendance upon rehearsals. They accuse the leader of partiality, and the salaried ones of taking "too many *airs*" upon themselves. This calls forth recriminations. The bitterness of jealousy increases; and ere six months have ended, the malcontents begin to retire from the service in disgust. The people take sides in the controversy. Both parties are blamed; and now that the volunteers have disappeared,

the remaining quartet seem less satisfactory. Popularity ceases, and the scene closes at the end of the year's engagement.

Changes upon changes ensue. Years fly swiftly in a large city. The restless inhabitants are seldom stationary. They go from church to church with the same facility that they change their dwelling places. And now there is another pastor, and virtually another congregation. All remembrance of the earlier arrangements has disappeared with the floating population who have left; and those who have supplied their places, are unwittingly repeating the exploded experiments of earlier times. A few years more, and the people, through some out-breaking weakness in the gallery, are brought to a solemn stand. A public meeting is called. A discussion ensues. The people are divided. Some propose one thing and some another. Deacon Stadtholder arose. He had been a member of that congregation for the last thirty-five years. He recollected all the musical changes which had occurred, and made his comment upon them. Nothing had been stable. Nothing had succeeded since the first abandonment of the congregational method. He had always been opposed to choirs. They never had prospered; and he was now in favor of returning to the good old way.

"But what will become of the people?" said an extensive pew-owner.

"Good music," said one of the trustees, "does much towards filling the pews."

"The people will all be disgusted," said an amateur.

The pastor arose. "There must be some way of sustaining the music in city congregations," said he, "which will be attended with results which are abiding and satisfactory. The subject is properly one of Christian enterprise. Hitherto, in the arrangements, as detailed to-day, it is plain that artistic considerations have taken precedence of devotional ones. This has

been wrong. We need not wonder at the failures which have occurred. Singers should be worshippers. We have no authority for a personated devotion in songs of praise. Such an idea is not contained in the scriptures. In all our arrangements we should remember that God looketh upon the heart. Why should the cultivation of church music be made a matter of mere taste or convenience, or church policy? We ought to be influenced by more weighty considerations. Psalmody must be made a branch of Christian enterprise; and we must engage in it with holy, self-denying, personal activity."

The pastor's appeal was decisive. He presented a new view of the subject, and held it up in such a light, that the people awoke for the first time to a strong conviction of personal accountability. A plan was agreed upon. Influential members in the church were forward in the undertaking. An excellent teacher was provided. Schools and rehearsals were well attended, and rightly conducted; and the pastor was often present to take part in the exercises.

A noble effort was now put forth, which was ultimately to be crowned with success. Progress was slow; for while old habits and prejudices could not at once be overcome; the accelerating influence of artistic motives was withdrawn. Appointments, too, were often frustrated by conflicting engagements. The labor, and discipline, and practice, had been greater than was first anticipated; and the congregation at length were becoming impatient. Many were predicting another failure; and not a few who commenced with ardor, had retired in discouragement.

It was time for some public demonstration. A new choir of fifty singers was organized, who met the congregation with a public rehearsal. The exercises were of peculiar interest to those who were spiritually-minded, though the performances, as all could see, were yet imperfect. Little was *said* against

the music, for much weight of personal character was embarked in the enterprise. There was some whispering among amateurs, and there were knowing ones among artists and professors, who exchanged significant glances, and some two or three ventured to toss their heads in derision. This was hard to be borne. A few of the more timid ones left the choir, and went to other churches, and several of the more affluent grew weary of effort, and left the rehearsals. The interest was beginning to flag. It was a critical moment. A little matter at that time might have defeated the enterprise. But the excellent pastor was unremitting in his exertions, his encouragements, and his prayers, and there were noble Christian spirits in that choir, who were not to be disheartened or intimidated.

The music, through the untiring industry of the singers, began visibly to improve. The people became patient, then attentive, and then more deeply interested. Even while the training was yet imperfect, they began to perceive a wide difference between real and representative devotion. The singing was no longer a subject for carping criticism. The choir were solemn personal worshippers; the people deeply sympathized with them, and united in the exercises with holy delight. Occasionally they lifted up their own accents in the full chorus of the assembly, with one heart and one voice.

The change thus happily effected, became permanent. The people had learned the right lesson, and troubles were at an end. Thenceforward the choir was easily sustained. Taking a new stand-point of observation, a flood of light was shed over the history of past proceedings. The people concluded that if Christians are to be materially benefited by the songs of Zion, they must make some other sacrifices than those of a pecuniary nature. They must be conversant with the subject, and prepare as individuals to bear some part occasionally in the public

exercises of praise. The object must be infinitely higher than that of mere musical enjoyment, which though the principal source of attraction at concerts, must here be subordinate. Spiritual advantages in the office of praise, must be sought like other blessings, in the way of God's appointment.

And here is the proper solution of the question which has called forth the preceding sketch. It is difficult to sustain church music in large cities, chiefly because so few are willing to make individual efforts and sacrifices, in a truly Christian spirit. Let the people adopt the course which has latterly been pursued by the church in N—— street, and there need be no fear as to results. But if they persist in the toleration of merely artistic motives and arrangements, they must make up their minds to suffer legitimate consequences.

XXVIII.

A TALENTED BUT IMMORAL CHORISTER.

“That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting.”—ST. PAUL.

In a charming valley, between two lofty ranges of hills, and on either side of a winding stream, that abounds in “water-privileges,” dwell an industrious population, chiefly descendants of New England. The first settlers were from the middling classes in society, active and economical, but more remarkable for good sense, than for sound learning or true refinement. They were a virtuous people. Music was almost their only source of amusement, and during the long winter evenings, they generally sustained an adult singing school.

Some thirty years ago, when “books were scarce and dear,” the teacher would give manuscript lessons for the singers to copy into their blank-books. The best copyists were the most active in “punching off the music,” and those who “punched the most,” were sure to learn the fastest; for being proverbially inquisitive, they were “bound to know” the name and the use of every character which was drawn by their pens. This was a decided advantage, for when books became plenty, the punchers were able to read them.

The violoncello and flute at that early period, were the only accompanying instruments at the village church. The one was frequently too flat, and the other was as often too sharp in ref-

erence to the proper pitch, till there was a fearful odds between them, and the singers were vacillating with reckless instability between the two extremes. At length the flute gave place to the violin, when the instruments, to the great comfort of the singers, were found to "sag together," so as to produce harmony. But this, in the opinion of some, had too much the appearance of "fiddling," and when at length the violin made its appearance at church, the worshippers below were sadly scandalized. The gentleman who led on that instrument, however, was no vocalist, and there was not a chorister to supply his place. What was to be done? After a free consultation, it was satisfactorily arranged, that the "fiddle should always be played wrong end upward." There was more philosophy in this decision than at first appears; for when the instrument stood downward, like a small bass-viol, it no longer brought to mind associations of the ball-room, and the low tavern. Mental associations have great influence in music. Even in these wiser days, when one sees a choir led by two upstanding violinists, with shaking heads and flourishing elbows, he can almost wish for a re-enactment of that old decision.

The choir in the village church continued to prosper till the violinist was succeeded by a vocal leader, who, though a talented man, was suspected of secret immoralities. Probably the suspicions were groundless, but they led some of the best singers to absent themselves from rehearsals and performances. The singers, in consequence, soon acquired such an inveterate "habit of flatting," that uniformly as often as once in two or three stanzas of a psalm or hymn, the "pitch would have to be sounded" anew. This was a sad annoyance, especially in seasons of public worship. Recourse was had to a teacher. The latter, though a man of skill, had never met with such a difficulty. The music seemed uncommonly harmonious, but the

whole choir would sink together by insensible degrees, at the rate of a semi-tone for every stanza. What could be the cause? The scale of nature, when absolutely perfect, has a slight downward tendency, but nothing, when compared with this. The slackening of viol strings will sometimes occasion a gradual depression of the pitch, but not so regular and so constant as the one in question. Nor could the two causes combined, produce so great a practical result.

The teacher was perplexed. He listened again, and again bethought himself. One single error in intonation he had noticed. The seventh of the scale was uniformly turned too high. To correct this interval, he supposed, might aggravate the difficulty; for when all the intervals were sinking at such a rate, why should the seventh be farther depressed? But, as every other expedient had failed, he took to task the interval in question, with about as much hope as the sailor had who threw his last cap at the thievish monkeys, and regained through their mimicking those which had been previously stolen. The expedient was successful. Tuning the seventh too high had led the voices uniformly downward. Depressing this one interval to its true relative pitch, prevented the others from sinking; and thus the teacher's task was accomplished.

The solution of this problem is left to the speculative theorist. The experiment may be of use to teachers and choristers. The exercises were all in the major scale. Tuning the third and fourth of that scale a little too high, has usually an upward tendency, while a similar elevation of the seventh interval leads to a gradual depression of the pitch. As these faults are more or less prevalent among vocalists, they may be considered as the chief cause of instability in the pitch.

But there is a more important chapter in the history of this choir. Talent improved. Taste became refined. As years

rolled on, the people were increasing in learning and refinement. An educated man, who had fine talents for music, volunteered his services as chorister. In this situation, he gained many ardent friends, and for awhile had the address to keep them. He sung sweetly, had a kind and winning deportment, and led the singing with great acceptance. But, unfortunately, the idol of the choir at length become vicious. The matter was no secret. His conduct was sometimes scandalous in the extreme. Yet, as he would appear to be sorry after every new offence, the choir pitied him, and mistaking his hypocrisy for ingenuous regret, were unwilling to discard him. This caused an unpleasant division among the parishioners. Some were for displacing him, and others were for retaining his services. He had skill, and he was amiable. Many good singers would have their failings. No one else could "lead the singers half so well," and, after all, he was "*naturally* a very clever fellow."

Up to this period, the volunteer choir had always been left to their own direction. They understood not the responsibilities of their position; and the present period of general excitement was no time for the inculcation of specific, moral, and religious ideas. The singers regarded themselves as so many instruments of a voluntary band, which needed only to be kept in order and skilfully directed. *How could* they spare their talented leader? His aid was indispensable. There was "no one like him."

Deeply did the pastor and the elders regret that the influence of special religious teaching had been so long withholden from the singers. The choir had been so long indulged and neglected, that their liberty of self-direction had assumed the importance of a prescriptive right. There was real trouble in that village. Who could tell how it was to be prevented, or where it would end? The peace of society was seriously invaded, and things were fast tending towards a dismemberment.

The conflict was long and painful ; but a crisis was at hand. Another sad outbreak of the man of loose morals drove him from the village in everlasting disgrace, just in time to humble the singers, and restore tranquillity to the agitated parishioners. The sad occurrence was overruled for good. After such flagrant abuses had prepared the way for the application of a remedy, it was easy to perceive what instructions were needed. The time had come when the nature of praise as a religious duty could be better appreciated and more happily realized in practice. There was no rashness, no denunciation. There were no overturnings in management. The church awoke to duty ; and some of its most important members united with the existing choir, and, under the Divine blessing, gave tone, as to manner and spirit, to the rehearsals and performances. Many a sad disaster might have been prevented by timely, judicious instruction.

XXIX.

FUN AT SINGING SCHOOLS.

"It is the nature of truth sooner or later to command recognition."

WASHINGTON ALSTON.

THE famous affair of throwing the tea overboard, which preceded the revolutionary struggle in this country, had in some respects its counterpart in musical matters. Foreign music must be thrown aside; and Americans, "*hit or miss, must make their own composures.*" Many a luckless wight put his hand to the work with about as much skill as a tolerable blacksmith might have displayed in watch-making. Such music, however, was not rejected. It was something new; something lively; something not derived from the sovereignties of the old world.

At that time there was no musical science in the country. A sixpenny gamut of four diminutive pages contained the usual amount of knowledge. Some two or three copies of "Tansor's Musical Grammar" were in the hands of individuals who kept them as choice relics. Yet the wonderful book was so miserable a thing, that every tyro would now turn it into ridicule. The book was the offspring of ignorance, sure to lead every one astray who should submit to its guidance.

Some curious publications of church music appeared. Billings led the way with a volume full of scriptural parodies wrought into anthems; such as, "And the enemy said, let us

draw a line from York to Canada," and others still more ridiculous.* Another author took the ground that, since there could be no discords in heaven, there ought to be none upon earth. His mission was to reduce all harmonies into the simplest concords, irrespective of forbidden sequences. Another issued a work in characters, which finally obtained the name of "dunce notes;" and another still, in which the lines of the staff were wholly excluded. Such "Yankee productions" are not without imitations at the present day, when ignorance can no longer be plead as an apology.

The psalm tunes of that period were rude and artless; and most of them contained passages of broken time which did great violence to the language. Preparations and resolutions; cadences, modulations, and rhythmic forms, were things unknown. The minor scale was usually without its accidentals. Chords were improperly constructed, and thrown into ambiguous and forbidden relations; and the melody was low, irregular, and fragmentary. In short, every rule of composition was violated, for the good reason that rules were not understood. Yet the music gave satisfaction, and in many instances became so strongly connected with devotional sentiments, as to continue long in favor.

The style of singing was in keeping with the character of the tunes. Distinct utterance was never attempted. Accents and emphases were disregarded. Time was imperfect; and the voice was supposed to be developed and tuned by an instinct of nature. All that is now understood by vocalization was then unknown.

During those long years of musical practice, adult singing schools became the favorite scenes of amusement. They gave the young people, during the winter evenings, many an oppor-

* Some of his later productions had less rudeness.

tunity for social converse and rustic gayety. Occasional irregularities excited no surprise. "Young folks," it was said, "must sometimes be together; they will have their amusements, and music is of all things the most harmless. It may do them good and be beneficial to society." Evils incidentally connected with the schools were to be patiently endured, as beyond the possibility of prevention. Notions and practices, which were then very prevalent, have not yet wholly disappeared.

The choir in the first church in S——, may be taken as a fair specimen of the times we are describing. As often as once in two years, a regular singing school was maintained during the winter months, for three afternoons and evenings in a week. Afternoons were devoted to the children. Two of the evenings were spent at different districts in school houses. The third was devoted to a general meeting in the village ball-room, on Sabbath evenings, which were not then regarded as holy time. What could be more suitable than to "follow up" the last hours of the holy day with the practice of psalmody? The young people were in their best dress. They were not fatigued with labor; and a little recreation appeared quite reasonable after the "confinement and the restraints" of the day. All who could "raise the eight notes" were "natural singers," entitled to the privileges of the school; the rest were "spectators." None but special geniuses would learn to read music. That was the business of teachers and choristers. The pupils sought amusement, and paid as little attention to rules as possible. The school had nothing to do with religious order. It was usually opened by the odd canon—

" Welcome, welcome every guest,
Welcome to our music feast,
Music is our only cheer," &c.

Then there was a catechetical exercise upon the sixpenny gamut. Then a few tunes were sung; commencing separately with the several parts of the score, led off by the uproarious intonations of the teacher, while other portions of the school were whispering, "making faces," or "cutting up" sly tricks of merriment, till a signal was given for a general rush of a hundred harsh voices, sufficiently loud to make the "foundations tremble." Several tunes, all taken up in the same manner, would occupy the first half of the allotted season. Then came the greatest charm of the evening—a long and merry recess, to be spent variously, according to the pleasure of individuals. Some, if the evening was pleasant, would "start off on a sleigh-ride," and be seen no more. Some would retire to the bar-room to "clear their throats of cobwebs." Others would be talking nonsense, or romping, or dancing, or joining in loud laughter or merry songs. At length a loud stamp of the foot, with a vociferating call for "silence," would be the signal for the gradual termination of the uproar. The remainder of the evening, on account of the many absentees, would drag heavily; the parts would be ill sustained, and the performances would close in a languid and listless manner.

Such were the biennial schools for the improvement of this choir, and the intervening winters usually gave rise to rehearsals of a similar character, conducted in turn by some four or five choristers, chosen by the choir from their own numbers, for this particular purpose. The rehearsals were not supposed to have any immediate bearing upon sacred things. They were considered by all classes as scenes of amusement.

Singers thus trained, would know little of the spirit of praise. They were not even *formal* worshippers. They gratified their own notions of taste, and sung so as to please the people with their music. Morally considered, they were as so many bas-

soons, and flutes, and fiddle-strings. This was the general idea of responsibility, and the soundness of it was unquestioned. The leading singers were triflers amid the public solemnities. They would have shrunk from the slightest imputation of personal piety.

With this state of things, the grand adversary of souls seemed entirely satisfied. An occasional preference for particular seats, was the only cause of disquietude, but this would be easily obviated. When people have made such permanent arrangements for heartless praise, the tempter seldom disturbs them seriously.

The people of the S—— church were sinning ignorantly. They were influenced by the examples which surrounded them. They adopted the prevailing notions and practices without examination, and for many years entertained no suspicion of their impropriety. But a pleasing revival of piety among them, effected a gradual change in their views of psalmody. Men began to think earnestly on practical subjects, and with more independence of mind. “Why should music pretend to be *vocal*, unless there was a distinct utterance of words? And why should words be used in the exercise of praise, without corresponding purposes and feelings in the singers? This cannot be right; for praise involves the same responsibility as prayer. If this be not so, why are we supplied with such heaven-wrought language for our themes of song?” Then again, they said, “If praise is such a responsible employment, why such trivial and misguided preparations as are witnessed in our schools and rehearsals, and why such an unmeaning and frivolous style of music?” These questions, suggested at first by Christian experience and observation, grew in importance as piety was deepening, and men were becoming more spiritual. The necessity of entire reform became manifest; and now, as might

have been anticipated, the adversary was wide awake. The choir were thrown into a ferment at the *ingratitude* of the people. This led some of the weaker brethren to declare in their favor, and some of the timid ones to wink at abuses, as if they had been incurable. But the more enlightened members of the church could by no means consent to encourage mere lip-service, and soon the whole congregation were beginning to participate in the trouble.

The pastor watched the gathering storm, and prepared for effort. He called together the friends of reform for a special conference. "What is to be done?" said he. "Not one of you has sufficient musical knowledge to act as chorister. At present there is not talent sufficient in the church to render the singing decent, without the aid of the choir. The very attempt would subject us to ridicule. But, brethren," he added, "your views of the necessity of reform are right and scriptural. The only question is, how shall they be realized?" A long conversation ensued. Some were for immediately disbanding the choir. Others were for training a new choir, who should sing from Christian motives. Others still were in favor of a sermon from the pastor, which should bring before the people the whole subject in its true merits. And yet there were others, who, when they saw that the subject would probably make difficulty, were in favor of an entire abandonment of responsibility. But, finally, the pastor suggested that the singers were not alone in fault. The church had been guilty of culpable neglect. "Even the reformers," said he, "may need reforming. Possibly, in the sight of God, we may be more guilty than the choir, in that we have cast off all responsibility." It was a home-thrust, and not a word was offered in reply. "Brethren," he added, "if we feel this to be true, let us acknowledge it. Let us go to the choir and confess our fault, speak kindly to them

of duty, pray with them, and help them as far as we are able, at their rehearsals, and their performances on the Sabbath. Let us do this thing wisely and meekly, and who can tell but we shall meet with the Divine blessing?" It was a happy thought. The proposal was adopted, and carried into effect. The singers were surprised, instructed, gratified, and melted. Several of them became pious; and though the improvement in adaptation, in style, and in spirituality was gradual, the object was finally accomplished. Again all troubles were at an end; for the adversary on being resisted, had taken his flight.

Two opposite methods, it seems, may secure tranquillity in our musical arrangements—either entire heartlessness, or thorough consecration of spirit. We can occupy no middle ground, and be free from difficulties.

XXX.

OLD TUNES vs. NEW.

"Words fitly spoken, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver."—SOLOMON.

"WE must have a change," said Deacon Aged, to the few parishioners who, after church, were standing around their pastor. "The singing does not give satisfaction."

"The singing was pretty fair to-day, deacon," replied the pastor, mildly.

"Yes, but many people complain of it, and the singers seem determined to have their own way."

"Perhaps they are not aware of the dissatisfaction."

"O yes, they are," said Doctor Cupping, "they cannot help knowing it. It is the common talk of the people."

"I have understood," said Mr. Wise, "that there is complaint in some quarters."

"But," said Deacon Young, "we certainly have a well-trained choir, and an excellent, efficient leader. To *me*, the singing is delightful. Many of the people are highly pleased with it; and I know not that it was ever finer than at the present time."

"So much the worse," said Deacon Aged, "if the style is inappropriate. We do not need a musical concert on the Sabbath for our edification. I cannot endure this new-fangled music. I like the old standard tunes."

"So do I," said Mr. Wise.

The doctor agreed with them, but the pastor did not commit himself; for he was decidedly a man of progress, just as the others had been when they were younger and were often at the rehearsals. He was, however, in favor of congregational singing, and was prepared in some measure to aid in its promotion, if his people should be so disposed. Nor had he "any objection to old tunes, if only they were good ones."

"I am glad to hear you speak so decidedly," said the doctor. "I had supposed you altogether in favor of the choir."

"And what if the supposition is true?" replied the pastor. "Perhaps I ought to be in their favor. They appear to be conscientious in the course they are pursuing; and they certainly can have no intention of displeasing us. They can have no motive to do amiss; though, of course, they are imperfect like the rest of us."

"In earlier days, when my practice was less," said the doctor, "I often sat with the singers and enjoyed the music; and the tunes we then sung, I always think, are the best in the world. I never listen to them without bringing old scenes to mind. Many of the people would sing them now, if they were to be given out; and then we should have something like congregational music, which all could enjoy."

"I am of the same mind," said Mr. Impulsive. "The choir and the leader ought to be severely censured."

"Why *severely*?" said Mr. Wise.

"They have no business to select such miserable tunes."

"They are not our hired servants."

"But they have no right to disoblige other people just for their own gratification."

"You speak," said Deacon Young, "as if the entire congregation were displeased."

"Yes, and I intend to tell them so."

"But you mistake—"

"I have heard several complain."

"And I have heard *many* express their delight. Others besides them would doubtless be pleased, if left without bias ; in matters of taste, like those of diet, a little infusion of sourness will spoil the whole dish."

"True," said Mr. Wise, "this spirit of fault-finding must injure the influence of the singers, without helping the music."

"It will naturally create dissension and bitterness of feeling," said the pastor.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Impulsive, "there may be difficulties, if we delay. I think with Deacon Aged—we must have a change, and the sooner the better."

"But, every change," said Mr. Wise, "may not be an improvement. Look at the congregation of Overton. Dispatch has long been the watchword there ; yet every change among that people has proved but a useless somerset. We ought to act with more deliberation."

"Brethren," said the pastor, tenderly, "have any of you spoken kindly to the singers on this subject?"

All were silent.

"Not *any* of you? Not *one*?"

There was no answer, for the thing had been wholly neglected, while complaints in the presence of others had been unrestrained.

"You perceive, then," continued he, "the plain path of duty."

"Enough has been said," replied Deacon Aged and the doctor.

"Too much, I fear," said the pastor, "and all in the way of evil speaking. I appeal to you, brethren, to say whether this

is fair dealing. Many of the choir are our much-loved communicants; and if the case were otherwise, such a course as we are pursuing could by no means be justified. Let us be right ourselves before we talk of further proceedings."

There was another pause. All felt reproved. Mr. Impulsive withdrew. The truth was, a few influential men, once tolerable singers, but now neglecters of the practice, had felt themselves licensed to speak freely of every real or imaginary fault of the choir, as if the members had been slaves or prisoners of war. No obligation was felt to the singers. Their efforts were not appreciated, their comforts were disregarded, and they were treated as public offenders. This had been done thoughtlessly; for it was then no uncommon thing in the history of psalmody. Ideas of style were regarded too exclusively; and men might show their own taste by depreciating the taste of others. Those, too, who were more conscientious in their complaints, never seemed to suspect that any measure of dissatisfaction they experienced was owing to themselves—to their own total discontinuance of the practice of psalmody at home and abroad. They felt troubled, and therefore spoke out their feelings without reserve. The impropriety of such a course, till now, had not occurred to them. The pastor's advice prevailed; and Deacon Aged, Mr. Wise, and the doctor, consented to hold a friendly conversation with the leader of the choir before the return of another Sabbath.

The leader of the choir was an intelligent man. He was a man of piety, remarkable for prudence, meekness, and calm decision. Deacon Young apprized him of the intended visit, and gave him a kind intimation of the topics which would be presented. This allowed him time for preparation. The committee were cordially received. After spending two-thirds of the evening in desultory conversation, the principal topic was

taken in hand. The people, the committee were sorry to say, had become dissatisfied with the music, and wished the choir to confine their selections chiefly to the old tunes.

"But, how is this?" gently responded the leader. "All who have hitherto spoken to me on this subject, have commended the selection and spoken well of the performances."

"You doubt the truth of our statement then," replied the deacon, drily.

"I receive it as coming from a true, honest heart, but—"

"But you question its truth."

"Rather say its correctness."

"You doubt whether the thing is so."

"How can I help doubting when more than fifty influential people, many of whom are reputed as good judges of music, have expressed themselves so decidedly on the subject?"

The deacon was now tempted to ask him if he had never *heard* of any uneasiness among the people. The thought "came to his tongue's end," but a rising blush showed that the good pastor's reproof had not been forgotten.

"There must be, somewhere, a misapprehension of the matter," said the leader. "But if I know of any who are dissatisfied, I ought to be willing to listen to the complaint. Here are three, at least, and they tell me of 'many more' who sympathize with them."

"Just so," said Mr. Wise.

"More than you imagine," said the doctor.

"More than half the congregation, *I* think," said the deacon.

"This is strange," said the leader. "You advise me to resign, then. That can easily be done. If, with all my labor, and care, and self-denial, I am only performing an unacceptable service in view of my fellow-worshippers, perhaps I *ought* to resign."

They were rather taken aback by this suggestion, especially as it was offered in a calm and kind manner. The little pit-tance that had been voted for his services was no object to him. He had no earthly interest in leading the music unless he could be useful. But the committee, of course, shrank from the idea of his resignation at that time. They had no notion of that sort. They only desired that there might be "a change in the selection of tunes."

"I am happy to know in this committee," said the leader, "such men as have been taught some lessons by personal experience which they may readily bring to mind. Brethren," said he, "would the choirs to which you respectively belonged in earlier days, have ever consented to confine themselves to the practise and performance of tunes that were then destitute of novelty."

It was a hard question, and their answers were evasive. He pressed his advantage.

"If I comply with your request, can you encourage me to hope that the singers will continue punctual at the rehearsals, which at all hazards must be maintained—that they will dwell with never-tiring interest upon music which has become stale to them by endless repetition? You, gentlemen, are in different circumstances. You have long since abandoned the practise of music, and can fall back upon by-gone associations. The songs of praise are perhaps not even heard in your families. Yet, believe me, if you were now to resume the practise, you would soon be tired of past remembrances, and require, as we do, occasional supplies of new music."

There was no reply. The truth was too palpable to admit of a further question; and they evidently felt its force. An effort was made to waive this topic and consider the expediency of congregational singing. To this, the leader would attend in

due time ; but since they had put him on the defensive, they could not object to hear what further he had to offer.

"Gentlemen, if you could succeed with the choir in realizing your wishes, could you defend me from complaints which would arise from people of reputed taste among us—the more than fifty influential persons who have volunteered their commendations of the music?"

"We can do it," replied Mr. Wise, "as easily as you can satisfy, at the present rate, the many individuals who are now complaining."

"Exactly so," said the doctor.

"Just so, I was thinking," said the deacon.

"But remember, gentlemen," he replied, "there is one remarkable difference in the two cases. The one party are encouraging and the other neglecting the art. Should the former have no manner of preference? As far as was practicable, I would also consult the feelings of the latter. I would desire to please them. But you admit that cultivation is indispensable ; and can this be pursued if, for the accommodation of the neglecters, we sacrifice all considerations of personal taste, and susceptibility, and enjoyment?"

Once more there was an effort to change the conversation, which did not entirely succeed. There was yet another topic for the consideration of the committee ; but, as the evening was fully spent, they politely excused themselves, and promised soon to call again. The truth was, they had taken an unexpected lesson, which required reflection ; and this, after the pastor's searching reproof, was working powerfully upon their minds. Considerations had been placed before them which could not easily be set aside ; and the committee were not men who chose to act unreasonably.

Meanwhile, another Sabbath was approaching. It was the

season of spring, when everything was in full bloom. The day dawned beautifully. Not a cloud was to be seen. The assembly was large. All of the choir were present. They had gained some intimation of the action of the committee; but the leader assured them that the interview had been a pleasant one; and that there was no occasion for anxiety. The exercises proceeded, and the music was more delightful than ever. The committee, whose tone of feeling had been considerably modified, began to imagine that already there was some appearance of improvement. The diminution of prejudice was favorable to the increase of susceptibility. Even the deacon thought the new tunes seemed "better than usual."

Matters were evidently getting into a good train. The committee felt little inclination for further interference; but they had promised another call, and must redeem their pledge. In a few days they did so. Desultory talk again consumed most of the evening, when the moment came for the reserved topic.

"Gentlemen," said the leader, "you are all agreed in preferring the old tunes?"

"We are," was the reply.

"But that is not sufficiently definite. Let us see whether you could agree as to the selection. Deacon Aged, have the goodness to name two or three of your favorite tunes."

"Why *I* like such good old tunes as Wantage, Bangor, and Funeral-Thought. Fifty years ago we used to sing them almost every Sunday."

"O, nonsense, deacon," said the doctor; "those old things would never go down with the people. I prefer such tunes as Huntington, Greenwich, and Mortality. Such tunes used to please everybody, some twenty or thirty years ago."

"Rather a tough dose you are preparing, doctor," said Mr. Wise. He was a younger man, and had a better taste. His

own preferences would have been more to the purpose. But it was useless to name them. There could be no agreement.

"You perceive, then, gentlemen," said the leader, "exactly how the case stands. If you could agree in making out a small list of old tunes for practice, I would cheerfully lay it before the choir for their consideration. But this cannot be. Your tastes are as widely different from each other as they are from my own. I will, however, do the best I am able. We occasionally sing old tunes, and shall continue to do so with increasing pleasure, if they are likely to prove acceptable. But you now perceive that a full compliance with your request would be impracticable."

This could not be denied, and the committee had the good sense and the magnanimity to relinquish the proposal.

"But allow me, gentlemen," he resumed, "to make one farther suggestion. Widely different as your preferences are from each other, there is one respect in which they substantially agree. Each of you, at some period in life, suddenly relinquished the practice of music, since which time you have made no farther progress. Now you are dwelling upon past remembrances, just as if the car of improvement had stopped forever from the moment in which you left it. Here lies the grand secret of such diversities in taste. They are not peculiar to this people nor to the present generation. Musical history sheds a flood of light upon this subject. But, neither the choir nor the leader can claim to be infallible. We may not have been sufficiently solicitous about the feelings of our fellow worshippers. Possibly, too, we have all been disproportionately solicitous about the *kind* of music which is to be the instrument of *spiritual* worship. We will all try to reform in this particular. Come into our schools and rehearsals. Join with us on these occasions in prayer and praise. We will be with you at the

evening lectures. Some of the tunes you then sing shall be sung afterwards on the Sabbath. This will be one step towards introducing congregational singing. Then, let us all have singing in our families, and teach our children to sing. In this way we shall, under the divine blessing, soon begin to feel united as Christian worshippers, with real delight in the offerings of praise."

The committee expressed their satisfaction at the proposal; and consented to act in accordance with it. Others followed their example, and the disquietudes which had arisen were soon forgotten.

XXXI.

MAL-ADAPTATIONS.

"Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs."—COWPER.

MANY of the lovers of music in this country, seem quite ignorant of the importance of mental associations in the cultivation of taste. The deficiency is everywhere apparent. A decidedly comic tune, for instance, sung in revolutionary times by enemies of the country, in utter derision of our cause and character, has become a favorite national melody. It holds the same place among Americans that the noble tune "God save the King" does in England, notwithstanding the unmistakable expressions of ridicule which adhere to the melody. A similar instance has occurred in religious music. A scoffing infidel, it is said, had set some miserable doggrels to an old "jigue-tune," in derision of the scenes of the final judgment. The infidel was afterwards converted; so thenceforward the mock production must be circulated without alteration, as if it had been a precious gift to the churches. Examples are often met with, where, by a double power of association, both the tune and the words bring some ridiculous scenes to mind. People who have little knowledge of such matters may not always be troubled; but they do great violence to the feelings of those who are well-informed.

Mal-adaptations less striking have perhaps been equally injurious. If once found in good society, they maintain their pernicious popularity in defiance of the claims of a better taste.

The choir attached to one of the larger churches in the town of Hammerwell, had used for a few years the rudest productions of American music which were to be found. The chaster specimens of English music which were subsequently taken in hand, formed too strong a contrast with their predecessors to give satisfaction. This music seemed comparatively heavy and dull. It did not appear to be in keeping with American activity. Occasional uneasiness was beginning to manifest itself; when a teacher came along with an ample supply of the luckless mal-adaptations to which we have referred. They seemed at first view to supply the exact deficiency which was felt. The following specimens will sufficiently designate their character. The music composed to "Sweet Anne Page" (the words found in one of Shakspeare's comedies), was applied to a passage in the hymns, "One there is above all others," "O how he loves!" That of

"Farewell, ye green fields and sweet groves
Where Phillis engaged my foud heart,"

was applied to

"Ye angels who stand round the throne."

This old love-ditty is now so extensively introduced among the churches, as not to be easily recalled. The tune "Auld lang syne" was set to "Jerusalem, my happy home." The "Few happy matches" to "Lo, on a narrow neck of land," and "When I was brisk and young" to "Let sinners take their course."

The exact history of this music was not understood by the

singers ; and they anticipated for it a most cordial reception among the good people of the congregation.

After a Sabbath or two had passed, a lady of some distinction exclaimed to the chorister—"O how could you sing such a tune ! I used in my days of folly to dance to it as a minuet ! I could not keep the scenes out of mind while you were singing." Another said—"Only think of 'Babbling echo' converted into a psalm-tune ! Who ever heard of such a thing ? In spite of all I could do, the foolish old words would come back upon me !"

The chorister went home mortified, but hoped for better things to come. The next two Sabbaths were more successful. The dramatic song "Little Pickle" to the words "Not to our names," did not happen to be recognized ; for none of the people were frequenters of the theatre. The Sabbath after was quite disastrous. "Why didn't you sing the old words 'We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet?'" said one in derision. "How could you sing that old merry catch !" said another. "Next Sunday I advise you to sing 'Drink to me only,' and 'Moll Brook,' and 'Dan Tucker !'" said a third. "That will never do, Mr. Chorister," said a fourth. "The old scenes of folly will come back upon us, if you give us the music with which they have been so strongly associated. Such music but ill accords with the exalted themes of our religion."

The experiment was over. That whole class of pieces fell at once into disrepute with the people. Neither the chorister nor the singers could longer endure them. Yet they gained a footing in many other congregations, and did great injury to the progress of taste. Several of them are still used in private circles, and it may be a weary while before such things as "Lang syne," "Anne Page," "Brisk and young," and "Indian Philosopher," are entirely banished from good society.

Meanwhile, an important lesson had been given to the more intelligent musicians who were engaged in the cultivation of psalmody. From the eagerness with which such pieces were at first received, it became evident that the people of this country required strains of music which were of a simple, yet vigorous and spirit-stirring character. The people at large were not musicians, nor even good judges of music. But they could feel the power of such strains and be benefited by them. Their wants must be met. The interests of religion required such a step, and even the sound progress of taste would ultimately be promoted by it. Foreign teachers demurred. *Learned* professors ridiculed. Amateurs were displeased; but the measure prevailed; and to this circumstance, perhaps, more than to any other, may be attributed the present revival of interest in psalmody throughout the American churches. Melodies which are new and attractive, and at the same time chaste and simple, are widely circulated in every direction. They have extensively taken the place of those mal-adaptations, and are supplying a want which has been deeply felt. It was well for the choir at Hammerwell that such a style was beginning to prevail; for by adopting it they gained an essential step in the progress of improvement. Their performances became animated and characteristic, and ultimately more effective and devotional. The melodies were such as all could enjoy and remember; and they carried them into the bosom of their families, and taught them to their children, and thus laid a substantial foundation for future improvement.

Many of the old melodies of Europe are connected with important historical associations, which have a tendency to perpetuate their interest. This circumstance has had much to do in forming the characteristics of transatlantic psalmody. Our country is yet too young to count on such influences. We can-

not yet point to churches and cathedrals venerable for their antiquity, which witnessed the songs of ancient worthies, martyrs, and reformers ; but if we wish to lay well the foundation of stability in the fabric of taste, it becomes us, while we employ effective melodies, to be jealous of the associations with which they are or have been connected.

XXXII.

DESPISING CULTIVATION.

“Considerest nought
Of duty’s royal edicts, that command
Thy talents to be lent.”—TUPPER.

A DEFICIENCY in musical skill within the limits of a particular town, is often occasioned by the unhappy influence of a few prominent individuals. An example of this sort was furnished by the village of M——. The clergyman, the lawyer, and the physician residing there, were men who, while at college, adopted the notion then prevailing, that music was unfavorable to sound scholarship, and who never afterwards paid sufficient attention to the subject, for the discovery of their error. They admitted in theory the importance of church music, but as none of them or their families could sing, their example of practical disregard, had a decided influence among the more intelligent villagers. Music had “no necessary connection with literature,” and, as an ornamental branch of education, it was lightly esteemed.

The three families were remarkable for Christian activity in other things. They stood foremost in benevolent enterprises. But not knowing to what extent a talent for music is the offspring of culture, they always excused themselves from the practice of psalmody. They could pretend to no musical taste, and they seemed rather to glory in the deficiency. The doctor said that he “liked best the music of a mortar and pestle.”

The lawyer said that, in his opinion, the fondness for music which many seemed to possess, "had more to do with affectation than with refined sensibility." For his part, he "would give more for one real specimen of forensic eloquence, than for all the concerts and oratorios of the land." The clergyman evidently expected but little advantage from the singing. He rather thought with some eminent writers, that music had "its strongest influence upon semi-barbarous nations," and he had remarked, that in these latter days, "some of the best Christians were the most indifferent singers." The former pastor of that people had paid no attention to music, and why should not his example be followed? "A man ought at least to know one tune from another, if he has anything *to do* with music."

The present clergyman was an excellent pastor. He loved his people, and exerted great influence over them. But he thought himself excusable for neglecting the music. The idea that he might easily have acquired both skill and taste in the art, never occurred to him; nor did he imagine it possible for him to cultivate those musical sympathies which have such a kindly influence upon the members and the performances of a choir. "Since *nature* has never *made* me a singer," said he, "I do not see that I have anything more to do with music, than a deaf man has with oratory, or a blind man with painting." As no one disputed his premises, his conclusions were regarded as legitimate. He was a sincere man. He abhorred every species of affectation. He could not pretend to sensibility when his feelings were not enlisted, and he thought himself, as many others have done, fully justified in leaving church music to the management of such persons as were willing to assume its responsibilities. Yet, as the singing was deemed essential to the interests of public worship, he would sometimes give the singers an encouraging word.

The greatest genius for music in the village at that early period, was a very poor, uneducated, English cobbler. He was a "*natural singer*." He was usually whistling over his work, and when retiring from it, would be humming a tune to the rhythm of his footsteps. His piety was of a happy mould, and the hymn of praise would not be forgotten in his morning and evening devotions. This man, miserably as he would "murder the King's English," was the only person capable of sustaining the office of chorister. He could "give the pitch" correctly, and "beat out the time," with abundant gesticulations. He had no knowledge of style, and no variety in manner. His habits and notions were all stereotyped. A teacher could neither alter him, nor give him a new idea. Yet, he was kind-hearted and faithful, always punctual, and ready to exert himself to his utmost ability.

The members of the choir, in regard to musical attainments, were every way worthy of their leader. They sung with all sorts of voices, great and small, hard, guttural, rough, slender, or nasal,—just such as they supposed had been given to them by the hand of nature. They had no idea of improving them by practice or instruction. There was no sweetness in their harmony. They often sung out of pitch, and out of time. Their vocal utterances were vulgar and indistinct. Accent, emphasis, and expression, were things unknown; and the entire movement was uniformly heavy, and destitute of animation. This was a thing of course, for if better singers had been at hand, they would not have "followed in the wake" of such a leader. Several efforts were made to improve the singing, but all to no purpose. The pupils were intractable, and the chorister, after all that could be done, would put his own heavy stamp upon the performances. The singing was ridiculous. It was a "laughing-stock" in the surrounding villages. Even the par-

ishioners grew displeased with it. But instruction, and ridicule, and complaint, were equally useless. Whatever modifications were attempted in the style, the good cobbler's influence would dissipate all signs of improvement. Year after year, this same result was patiently borne. The leader did his best. He was a good man, and no one else was deemed capable of setting the psalm. Disgust at all musical pretensions, was the natural consequence of such a state of things; and we need not wonder that for some twenty years, no improvement was witnessed in the village.

Soon after this period, the lawyer was called away by some official appointment, to one of the inland cities, and a new physician came into the place, who was fond of good music. The population had greatly increased in numbers. There was now some appearance of musical talent in the place. But there was still the good, noble-hearted leader in the way. Nobody could sing with him, or alter him, and he had served his generation too faithfully to receive an unceremonious dismissal. The congregation owed him a debt of gratitude, and they must continue to bear with him. He grew old and infirm. But he loved to lead the singing, and the people would never subject him to the mortification of being superseded. So from mere considerations of kindness to the true-hearted, though illiterate brother, the public praises of God must continue to be a subject of derision.

The chorister was not responsible for this protracted disgrace. He did his utmost, and was doubtless accepted by the Master of Assemblies. The people should have better understood their duty. But, till he had tuned his last notes in the earthly sanctuary, they never awoke from the lethargy which had been brought upon them by the first three educated families, who were despisers of musical cultivation.

XXXIII.

A THEATRICAL SOPRANO SINGER.

“Doing evil, that good may come.”

“OUR minister does not seem to fill the house,” said one of the trustees to another, as they were returning from an evening service. It was at the Monumental Church, in one of our principal cities, at a time when there was much competition about splendid edifices for public worship. “Our minister does not seem to fill the house. What shall we do?”

“He is not so popular,” said the other, “as we anticipated.”

“He seems to have talent; but somehow he does not *take* with city people.”

“I wonder if he could not get up a series of discourses on some *taking* subject? The man has genius, you know.”

“He tried that device while you were off on a western tour. He preached two sermons on the longevity of Methusaleh, three on the aborigines of Palestine, two on the ‘wise men of the east,’ and four on the ‘demoniacs of gospel days.’ But nothing would answer. People ran in just to see what the man could be at, but curiosity was soon satisfied.”

“Perhaps he could be induced to improve his manner of delivery. People are fond of oratory.”

“I wish he might; but he despises such attractions.”

“That is unfortunate.”

"At this rate we shall never sell our pews."

"That would be ruinous."

"The church, you know, would have to be sold under the hammer, and then our other property near by would depreciate in value."

"That must never be. But we are in a bad fix. We have fairly settled the man, and must make the best of him."

"He has rather settled us, I think. We cannot decently move, in the matter of another pastor, short of a year, and that will be too late."

"Something must be done."

"What shall it be?"

"My opinion is, that, if one end of the church has not sufficient attraction, we must make up the balance at the other end."

"Good! That is a bright thought."

"Let us have a splendid organ, and have it played in a masterly manner."

"That can easily be done."

"Then let us employ Mr. Blackboardman to train for us a first-rate volunteer choir."

"Well, I suppose a pretty liberal outlay in such expenditures, will be good economy in the end."

"Undoubtedly."

"But we must not fail. This seems to be the only hope."

The two men had incurred such personal liabilities in the erection of the church edifice, that no one ventured to interfere with their plans. The measure was adopted. The organ was spoken for, and the player engaged. A school was opened. Mr. Blackboardman commenced his labor; but there was not time for finishing it. The interests involved required dispatch. The half-tutored volunteers must be put to the service, and

afterward be more perfectly instructed. Mr. B—— remonstrated, but to no purpose. Delay was out of the question. Several splendid edifices would soon be opened in the vicinity, and now was the only time to make an impression. Another month's delay might be ruinous. The singers took their places. As the choir were numerous and the organ was loud, individual imperfections were hidden in the depths of the harmony. The performances, for a sabbath or two, were rather imposing. They were better than could have been reasonably anticipated. But they did not create a strong sensation. "This," said one of the two trustees, "will never do. The south end of the church must have more attraction."

"That is pretty obvious," said the other.

"How shall this be secured?"

"I can think of but one way, and that is rather expensive."

"What is it? We must not stick at expense in such a dilemma. We are well in for it, and must either sink or swim."

"City people, you know, are fond of *solo singing*. They are not so partial to choirs."

"True. We see that in concerts and oratorios."

"I heard at the theatre in New Orleans, last week, a Miss Nightingale, who had just made her debut. She is not known in this city. Her voice is loud and commanding, and at the same time polished and effective."

"But what would you do with the choir?"

"Let them remain. Miss N—— would sing only an occasional stanza alone; which, you know, would appear all the better in contrast with the choir."

"But what would the choir say to such a measure?"

"We will not consult them."

"True; we are obliged to act, and may as well be independent."

"I think I can satisfy them."

"Well, I'll go for the measure. But we must keep dark and act wisely."

"Never fear me for that. I will write to the young lady by the next mail. I will keep her for a few weeks in my own family, and introduce her as a personal friend; and the subject of a salary need never be mentioned."

"That, I think, will do. But we need not wait for the slow operation of the mails."

"True. I will take a shorter course."

A telegraphic dispatch to New Orleans secured in an hour's time an engagement with Miss Nightingale for one year; and by the next sabbath she was on hand to take her seat in the choir. The singers, in their simplicity, supposed that the individual so respectably introduced must be a lady of some consideration. The teacher thought there was something rather singular in the matter, but very prudently kept his thoughts to himself. The trustee who had introduced the stranger was present to assist in the direction, and he managed adroitly. The new singer soon created a strong sensation. She had a charming countenance, and a commanding voice; and though her manner seemed unpretending, he gave her now and then a fine opportunity for personal display. The people of the city flocked to the church. The seats were filled with wealth and fashion. The pews were soon sold, and pecuniary liabilities were discharged.

Up to this period no difficulties had occurred in the choir. But, now that the object for which it had been formed was accomplished, the two trustees grew remiss. Miss N——, through the watchful guidance of her employer, had behaved discreetly. Now he must take another western tour; and she, after residing three months in his family, must spend the rest of her year

at a respectable boarding house. There she has no suitable advisers. The "free and easy" ones of the profession are making up to her. She goes with them to places of amusement, and assists them in giving secular concerts. Her delicacy of deportment is laid aside. She appears fond of display—is not to be directed or controlled. Her deportment in church is light and trifling. She pays no heed to the subject of song or the solemnities of the place. What is it to her if the singers are displeased. She has found friends who are more congenial. The choir are mortified and grieved, but there is no use in complaining to the people. "Miss N—— had a fair introduction," they say, "and is doubtless a young lady of real worth. The choir are envious on account of her great popularity." The people drink in the sweet melody which flows from her lips, and bless themselves with the possession of such a charming singer. "There is not her equal in all the city." But at length her imprudences increase. She behaves ridiculously in sight of the assembly. She exchanges glances, and smiles, and "nods and becks," with individuals who are wild, and reckless, and ungodly. The singers have lost all respect for her, and some of the people below are beginning to complain. She hears of it. "No matter. Let them talk. She will give them a subject." Before the next sabbath she is at the theatre as an actress, receiving the "most unbounded applause." The choir are indignant, and many of the parishioners are scandalized at her degradation. "What would her employer think, if he were present? How could he have been so imposed upon?" Just this result, however, *he* had *anticipated*. Before his return to the city, a young lady of less talent but of better principles, is employed to succeed her, and the affair is forgotten.

The employment of a theatrical singer at the Monumental Church was not a new device in that city. Many examples had

occurred where this thing was done openly, and where the arrangement excited little observation. But additional light had of late been thrown upon the subject of church music, and such a measure now required secrecy. It was known only to the contracting parties. When the *scandal* took place, no one of the people cared to make searching inquiries. The dilemma had been a pecuniary one, and they had escaped from it. The matter had been in the hands of business men who were not professors of religion—and the church and the pastor had not been consulted in the affair.

A year or two elapsed, and the diminution of novelty was lessening the attraction of the south-end. The attendance at church became less constant and regular. This would never answer. Property in that vicinity must not suffer by any decay of popularity in the Monumental. There is a vacancy in a thriving village not many miles from the city. It is whispered to some of the ambitious ones in that place, that probably, if a call were given to the city pastor his partiality for a country residence might lead him to accept it. 'Tis done. And soon the Monumental is supplied with a distinguished pulpit orator. The south-end lessens in importance. It may help itself. Musical taste and skill decline. The singing is often miserable. Difficulties arise among the singers. No matter. The preacher now sustains the interest of the exercises. The house is crowded. Pecuniary considerations are at rest. The trustees are satisfied. The pastor has no taste for music; and while his popularity lasts, the singing will be neglected. This is a matter of course. For where an edifice is built, a congregation gathered and a minister selected on the basis of pecuniary thrift, what should prevent the office of praise from abuse and desecration?

XXXIV & XXXV.

RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO CHOIRS.

“ Shine without desiring to be seen.”—COWPER.

A LARGE town on the northern border of one of the Western States, furnishes the history of two choirs affording several instructive incidents. The two churches to which they belonged were of the same denomination, the one having colonized from the other. The separation was occasioned by no disaffection or disunion of interest, but for the commendable purpose of accommodating the augmenting population of the place. However, when the separation had actually taken place, the independent branch became desirous of a rapid growth, without sufficient regard to the welfare of the parent church. This gave displeasure, and awakened feelings of mutual jealousy and suspicion. The two societies blamed each other, and not entirely without reason. The one was ambitious and imprudent, the other was selfish and timid. Yet, there was no open censure. There were no real feelings of hostility ; but there was just that amount of mutual jealousy which served to produce coldness, and give rise to occasional feelings of rivalry and distrust. Each society became ambitious of having the best “ meeting-house,” the best congregation, the best preaching, and the best music. This was as great a hinderance to the progress of good taste as to the increase of spirituality.

Each of the two choirs had a pious leader, who was fully competent to give direction to the music ; and each embraced within its members an unusual amount of piety, and talent, and social influence. Both had been instructed by the same teacher, and been fully apprized of the solemn responsibilities which rested upon them. Of these they were not unmindful. They often felt them as a heavy burden, and sought for aid from the only true Source. They had no idea of being formalists. But mental habits are often stronger than good resolutions. The mean yet almost unconscious spirit of rivalry had been cherished too long to be readily overcome. Each choir had an independent character to sustain. It could not bear to be outdone by the other. In its numbers and its influence, in its selections and performances of music, and in its effectiveness in taste and feeling, each desired to stand first. This, since advantages were about equal, required effort, and care, and anxiety, and watchfulness. This feeling of rivalry produced some good results, such as increase of diligence, and punctuality, and enterprise, and practical skill ; yet it was anything but favorable to refinement in taste or growth in piety. In proportion as skill was increasing, therefore, the real pathos, and devotional influences of the performances were found to diminish.

A similar result has often been produced by improper selections of music ; but in the present instance the selections were judicious. They were quite well adapted to the condition and the wants of the worshippers. Still, in both churches there was a feeling of barrenness and inquietude among the singers which was beginning to pervade the congregations. What could be the cause ? Could it be the increase of musical skill ? “ If so,” said the people, “ we must begin to limit our acquirements by some intelligible criterion of utility.” In both congregations there was much speculation on the subject, which

was not remarkable for wisdom or discernment. The interests of psalmody were at this time greatly endangered. A little matter might have produced discouragement. The singers themselves were entirely in the dark. They had too little knowledge of their own habitual feelings, to admit of their detecting the real cause of the difficulty.

But the trouble was not confined to the music. It pervaded everything. The preaching, the prayer-meeting, the Sunday-school,—all the forms of active benevolence manifested an increasing want of unction. At length the real cause of barrenness was suspected. The brethren of the two churches did not sufficiently love each other, nor seek for mutual prosperity as branches of the same heavenly vine. The churches came together for the purpose of mutual confession and heart-felt sympathy. The Master smiled graciously upon them, and religious influences began to revive. Monthly union-meetings held alternately at the two places of worship, were attended with a most happy influence. In the warmth of Christian affection, jealousy disappeared, as the mists of the morning are dissipated by the rays of the rising sun.

The choir profited by the discovery, established union rehearsals of a similar character, and exchanged all their jealousy and suspicion for good-will and mutual confidence. No longer emulous of artistic superiority, their minds would now be fixed devoutly upon the subject matter of their songs; and they could look upward with humble yet cheerful confidence for the Divine blessing. They did not look in vain. The blessing exceeded their largest expectations. The change was as surprising as it was delightful. They could then understand how greatly they had sinned in the indulgence of unchristian feelings; and thereafter they heartily united in the same purpose of elevating in spirit as well as in manner the high praises of the sanctuary.

XXXVI.

A DEACON AFRAID OF THE EXHIBITION OF TRUTH.

“Negative virtue is positive vice, if the means exist of improving it.”—ZIMMERMAN.

“WHY is it,” said a youthful pastor to one of his efficient deacons—“why is it, that in all our efforts towards promoting the praises of God, we are so sparing of time, and labor, and expense?”

“We do not expect so much benefit from the singing, as from other things.”

“Why not?”

“We learn from experience.”

“In what way, I should like to know.”

“Why, the singing is always conducted by the young people, who are seldom what they ought to be. They get themselves into difficulty and trouble. They seem to care for nothing beyond their own gratification.”

“This cannot be right. The friends of God should become personally active in celebrating his praise.”

“It would seem so; but the members of the church have very little talent for music; especially for psalmody.”

“Nor much concern about it.”

“We have not much taste.”

“Nor much sense of duty or idea of privilege in this matter, I fear.”

"Exactly so."

"Could none of you sing in earlier days?"

"Yes, many of us were good singers before we left the choir and the rehearsals. But our voices have, since that time, entirely failed. Only think what singing we have at evening lectures and communions. We can hardly endure our own voices."

"Do the people sing in family worship?"

"I think not. There does not seem to be a musical family among us."

"That is strange!"

"Some eight or ten years ago, I used myself to be called a tolerable singer; but now my voice is rough, you know, and I easily get out of breath, and lose the pitch and the time. I used to sing three hours together, without weariness; but now, a single hymn will use me up completely."

"Are your lungs weak, deacon?"

"They seem to be so, for singing."

"Perhaps you had better apply for medical aid. Lung complaints, you know, require attention."

"Me! why, I am hearty as a buck; never was better."

"And how is the case with others who have lost their voices? Are their constitutions broken down?"

"O, no. Nothing of that. Only their *voices* have failed."

"Do their children sing?"

"Some of them a very little at the sabbath school."

"I think I have sometimes heard sweet voices in the parlor, when I have been passing their dwellings."

"O, yes; some of the young ladies can sing fashionable songs and love ditties; but they neglect psalmody. Their lips on the sabbath are perfectly sealed."

"Deacon, did you lose your voice all at once, or gradually?"

"Gradually, I think."

“Did it begin to fail before you stopped practice?”

“When I settled in life, I became too busy to attend rehearsals. So I left the choir. Ever since that time my voice has been failing.”

“And suppose you were suddenly to give up labor; how long before your strength would begin to fail, and your hand to lose its skill in the more delicate operations in cabinet-making?”

“Not very long, I reckon. But what has that to do with the subject?”

“Very much, I assure you. People lose their voices by neglecting to use them, and are therefore accountable for the loss. But this is not all. They can generally regain them by a reasonable amount of practice, and consequently are bound in duty to make the effort.”

“That is quite a new idea. Are you sure it is correct?”

“So we were instructed at the seminary. The idea was *new to us*, but we soon found it true in practice.”

“Is it possible?”

“It is even so. You yourself have described the usual symptoms of decay, almost in the very words of the professor. He told us that from the moment we neglected practice, our voices would begin to fail; but said that they would continue to serve us till late in life if we continued to cherish them. They would hold on as long as the physical constitution should remain unimpaired. Song, he said, was like speech, in this respect.”

“It *may* be so with *some* people.”

“It was given as a *general* principle.”

“So you think there is no need of such poor singing. Do you imagine the brethren will believe that theory?”

“Certainly, since it is true. Why not?”

“It is so different from what we have always supposed.”

"Your very history proves the first part of it true; the remainder is easily tried."

"You will find it difficult to persuade us to try, I reckon."

"I have something to say on that subject. If I can show you and others, that there is a *duty* to be performed, I shall expect the effort to be made."

"You will find some lions in the way, I think."

"*The lions are all chained that meet us in the path of duty.* Just look at the subject. A church lose their voices by neglecting to use them in the praises of God. By practice, they might easily regain them; instead of which they plead the loss, in extenuation of perpetual neglect; and give over the heaven-appointed office of praise into the hands of unconverted, giddy youth. Having thus degraded the office, they derive little benefit from it, and then plead the barrenness of results as a reason why praise itself should be undervalued. And worse still. Many individuals who have acquired talent for secular music, and who, we trust, are Christians, still refuse to open their lips in the praises of God!"

"Why, sir, you are making a strong case of the matter."

"It is even stronger than I have made it. Remember it is an unspeakable *privilege* for such creatures as we are, to be allowed to unite in exercises of praise. There are but two methods of addressing the mercy-seat, in this benighted world of ours. Shall we use the one and decline the other? Shall we be like apostate beggars, who plead for favors, but refuse to give thanks? Shall we even neglect the *outward ceremony* of praise? Hypocrisy herself would be ashamed of that!"

"Why, really, you seem to be hard upon us. We have no such ideas of responsibility."

"True—very true. This seems the only alleviating circum-

stance. But it is time for the 'sin of ignorance' to be done away. The people must be instructed."

"You will not think of preaching upon the subject?"

"Why not?"

"You will displease the singers, disoblige the people, get yourself into trouble, and—"

"Have I displeased *you*?"

"Not at all. I have been much interested."

"Yet you would have others left in ignorance, who have as good a right to the truth as yourself, and who, perhaps, would receive it with equal pleasure."

"Perhaps not with equal advantage. Many a difficulty has arisen from meddling with such matters, you know."

"Difficulties will continue to arise, till the church awake to duty."

"I fear you will be sorry if you meddle with so sore a subject."

"That sore must be probed, if it is ever to be healed."

"I reckon you will be apt to find some PROUD flesh in it."

"Deacon, I am going to preach on that subject. Do you think me afraid? You ought to understand me better. I am bound to declare the whole counsel of God. If the people refuse to hear, the fault will be theirs. I must be faithful."

"Prudence is a duty, as well as boldness."

"But, it is not the part of prudence to leave the people in ignorance of so essential a subject, especially as that ignorance is connected with sin. Prudence, in such a case, has respect chiefly to the time, the manner, and the spirit of the instruction."

"Well, if you *must* preach upon that subject, I hope you will rightly divide the word, and give to each a portion in due season."

"Certainly, I shall endeavor to do so. You can imagine how I shall divide the word, by what has been said to you. The

proper season is the first pleasant Sabbath, and I hope you will be on hand, among others, to receive your portion."

At this point the conversation terminated. The deacon went home full of anxiety. He had many forebodings. On the next Sabbath, the pastor fulfilled his engagement to the letter. He came into the pulpit for once, without any formal preparation. He wished, in the plainest possible manner, to bring before his people a subject which was very important and very delicate. He had not forgotten to ask counsel of Heaven respecting it, and he now solicited in behalf of it, the candid, prayerful attention of his hearers. His whole manner was mild and affectionate. His ideas were happily arranged. His statements were lucid and biblical, his arguments irresistible, and his inferences conclusive. His people were greatly surprised and interested. The deacon was wonderfully relieved, and when the last hymn had been given out, he slipped into the desk to suggest the appointment of a church meeting on the subject, without further delay. The appointment was made accordingly, and on the given evening there was a full attendance. The long-neglected practice of psalmody was then resumed. The pastor, himself an excellent singer, directed the exercises. The meetings were continued from week to week, and soon an entire change became visible. The people began to sing at family worship, and at church. Many of the members became fine performers, and united with the choir. The latter, pervaded by new influences, became more effective and stable. No difficulty had been encountered. Not a lion had been seen. As all parties had been wrong, every one could take his own "portion" of the admonition, without any accusation of personalities. Thenceforward, while the office of praise was conducted on right principles, such blessed results were witnessed, as no longer to allow of its being lightly esteemed, or neglected.

XXXVII.

TACT AT CONCEALING BLUNDERS.

"Have the courage to face a difficulty lest it kick harder than you bargain for."—ANON.

"WHEN you have made a blunder, always put a good face upon it," said a distinguished chorister, "ten chances to one, the listeners will never detect it." There was good sense in this direction, for the audience have not generally before them the *means* of detection. At that time it was the ambition of many leaders to exhibit their own accuteness by publicly exposing errors in the performances, even in time of worship. Not so the chorister before us. He had many mistakes of his own to be hidden ; and, happily, he had a choir to lead who well knew how to follow him. They knew their own mistakes would never be publicly exposed, and they were always watchful to prevent a discovery of his.

One day while singing a hymn of ten stanzas, he forgot which among the number were to be omitted. So to put a good face upon the matter, he omitted five in succession, articulating the first word after the skip so distinctly as to enable the singers to follow him. The choir all skipping alike, lead each one of the congregation to fancy himself mistaken, and the pastor to imagine that his directions had been misunderstood. The chorister had no intention to deceive ; but there was some-

thing to be done, and there was no time for asking questions.

Once, while performing a long set-piece, he unwittingly turned over two leaves at a time, and commenced the ensuing strain as if nothing had happened. In an instant the choir followed him without the least sign of embarrassment. He did not discover his mistake till the next day, when informed of it by the singers. The piece, by the omission of two quarto pages, had been reduced to a reasonable length; and the people, if they had understood the omission, would doubtless have been pleased with it, and supposed it intentional.

A blunder once occurred which was more singular. When the pastor had read a "long-metre hymn" of six stanzas, the chorister started off with a tune in Double Common Metre. The former observed the mistake, appeared evidently embarrassed, anticipating a "real break-down." The latter making the discovery in the midst of the second line, instantly recollected that the hymn was overloaded with adjectives which were not material to the sense, went on by skipping here and there a word, as coolly as if the hymn had previously undergone a revision. The singers followed him. The pastor grew composed, and soon sung like the rest. When the chorister was leaving the house one of the influential members of the congregation said to him: "I wonder why our pastor came to make such a mistake to-day? I never saw him more embarrassed." He doubtless spoke the mind of the people around him. The chorister loved his pastor too well to have him father the blunder, yet he saw the advantage of putting a good face upon it. The people might otherwise have been impatient with him.

The choir had confidence in their leader. He was a man of principle. He understood himself, and always found some way of putting a good face upon things. If he was liable to

mistakes, the cause was well-known to them. The pastor would seldom give him sufficient time for careful preparation. The list of hymns was occasionally furnished, but more frequently forgotten. Everything then was to be done in a moment. The hymn, the metre, the tune, the pitch, the movement, the expression, the omission of stanzas, the subject matter, and the preparation of the heart—all at the same moment claiming attention! Who, in such haste, and amidst such varied responsibilities, could be expected to act without occasional mistakes? Choristers should always be seasonably furnished with the list of the hymns, that they may be relieved from every unnecessary embarrassment.

XXXVIII.

“BOUGHT OFF.”

“Who is there, even among you, that would shut the doors for nought.”—MALACHI.

MR. DRILLMAN was a music-teacher, remarkable for his untiring assiduity. With talents above mediocrity, he would labor cheerfully from morning till night, for the advancement of his pupils. His faithfulness was soon rewarded by an appointment as teacher and chorister in Mechanic-street church, in the city of T——. His salary was small for the services required. An adult singing-school was established, for the purpose of sustaining a choir. His pupils were numerous. To those who could be useful in the choir, he gave much instruction gratuitously, and when he found a remarkable voice, he spared no time or expense in training it for service. By such means, he found himself in a year or two, surrounded by one of the best choirs in the city. Their performances attracted attention. Mr. Drillman's voice was not remarkable, but some of his singers might be useful elsewhere. In many of the city congregations, there was more wealth than industry, and more taste than practical skill. When a soprano was wanted, Mr. Drillman's best performer must be “bought off.” His most efficient alto, and tenor, and bass, were next required for similar purposes. At first he was gratified with this demand. It was giving him a character. His pupils were increasing in number

and in diligence. For the loss of one soprano, for example, some four or five would become emulous of supplying her place. But soon these inroads upon his choir became more frequent, and it began to seem as if he had just been cultivating a nursery for city supplies. He took the alarm, and kindly remonstrated with his pupils, but to no purpose. Misses D——, E——, and F——, had as good claim to a salary, as Misses A——, B——, and C——, if opportunities should offer; and Misses J——, K——, and L——, needed remuneration for time spent in practice, as really as Misses G——, H——, and I——, had done. They all had this object in view, when they first entered the class. They did not wish to incommode their teacher, but he "would never want for pupils," and he could "make them all good singers." Better to understand his real position among them, he made private inquiries, till he ascertained that every singer to whom he had given gratuitous instruction, was looking forward to some preferment.

This was very trying. At the next rehearsal he made a second appeal. He spread the whole subject before them in detail. If *all* were expecting to leave, what was he to do? Many had received gratuitous instruction for some three or four years. How was he to be remunerated for such an amount of labor? Was it right that he should be thus training singers at a great expense and labor, for the highest bidders in the market? Again, the pupils had no desire to embarrass their teacher. But they were not all "expecting to leave him at once." He had been very kind to them. They never could fully repay his kindness. But they were doing what they could. Certainly their services must be worth something to him. Things were worth just what they would bring in the market, and if their services were not particularly valuable, they would, of course, never command a salary.

Such selfishness as this he had never anticipated. The interests of the church were disregarded. The love of the employment was of no account. The glory of God in the celebration of his praise, was a subordinate consideration. "Leading singers," they said, "ought always to be paid." There was "no use in spending one's time for nothing." But this last remark was as applicable to the teacher as to themselves. Gratuitous labor was increasing upon his hands, and yet the choir, as a whole, were not improving.

He next made a full representation of the case to the trustees, but their observations had been made from a different stand-point. The excellent teacher, who had been so many years with them, had given great satisfaction. He had freed them from all care and perplexity, and now, though it was "hard to be so drawn upon," he was only paying a tax upon his own popularity. The reason he could not keep his pupils in the choir was, that he made them such good singers. The trustees were sorry that his labors had been so multiplied. They would be glad to see him more fully remunerated, but the low state of their finances would not warrant any increase of his salary.

"But," said the teacher, "are there no members of the church who will qualify themselves to become leading singers, through love for the employment?" It was a hard question. The trustees knew not how to answer it. Professors of religion had often been among his pupils, but not one of them would refuse a proffered salary. They had been willing that their teacher should labor unrewarded, for their special benefit; but in their own case, they had spent much time in musical practice, and "must have a proper remuneration." At length his choir was beginning to decline. Within the few years of his engagement with that people, no less than fifteen distinguished singers had been "bought off" from his choir. On these he

had bestowed an untold amount of gratuitous labor, and yet the music was not well sustained. Very wisely, therefore, he sent in his resignation, and went to a more promising field of labor.

Other teachers in that city had similar cause of complaint. Voluntary choirs would be drawn upon with as little ceremony as articles would be purchased at an auction. Was this right and honorable? If not, who were most in fault, the purchasers, the *things* purchased, or the congregations which were generally too indifferent to rectify the abuse?

Λ Λ Λ I X.

THE MISTAKE OF AN EXCELLENT LEADER.

“ Knowledge is power.”

SOMEWHERE in the far-west—an appellation not very distinctive—there was a small village which ultimately became a large city. The first evangelical church in that village was well sustained from the period of its formation. The music, for a time, was ill-ordered and deficient. But a man of influence, greatly beloved for his excellence of character and disposition, volunteered his services as instructor and leader. The labor he bestowed, the criticisms he made, and the piety he manifested, soon put the music upon a good basis. The choir were deeply interested. The congregation were highly pleased. There was not a dissenting voice. Mr. Heman was just the man they needed. He knew precisely what ought to be done, and might have everything his own way. His schools and rehearsals were well conducted. The music, while perfectly chaste, was admirably adjusted to the condition and the wants of the people. They delighted in it as a pleasing auxiliary of their devotions. Perhaps few examples have occurred in modern times, where exercises in praise were better ordered or more fully appreciated.

But the people acquired no wisdom in musical matters from this delightful experience. They attributed everything to the

character and spirit of the man; and saw no particular connection between the system of operations and the results. No difficulties had occurred in this department of public worship, and why should any be apprehended for the future? Mr. Heman was unwearied in his exertions. He needed no counsellors. He was affluent and liberal. He was a man of leisure; and he had too much regard for this interest to allow it to suffer.

Everything passed pleasantly on for years, till at length his pecuniary affairs became so deranged as to require the closest attention to business. Rehearsals in consequence became unfrequent. The music began to depreciate, and his own voice through disease was beginning to decay. The latter circumstance was more evident to others than to himself. Others improving in musical susceptibility, began to be somewhat disquieted. An organ was placed in the church. Increasing practise was needful to bring the voices under due subjection. This practise was greatly beneficial in other respects; and the singing revived, till once more for several years it gave entire satisfaction. The difficulties in directing the music were increased by the presence of the organ; but the leader was fully equal to the task. He manifested no embarrassment, and everything was so entirely confided to his direction that the difficulties of his position were not at all apprehended. To lead well, in such circumstances, requires knowledge and practical experience. Yet Mr. Heman gave directions with such apparent ease, that the intrinsic difficulties of his position were not suspected. The organist saw it his interest to be entirely subservient. The singers loved him and were easily guided in all things by his example. The love of social enjoyment and artistic display was therefore held in strict subserviency to the interests of devotion.

Unfortunately for this interest, however, the health of Mr.

Heman began to decline. He sickened and was brought near the borders of the grave. Little hopes, for a time, were entertained of his recovery. More than a year elapsed before he was again seen in the worshipping assembly. His constitution was enfeebled, his voice had decayed; and, unable to take charge of the music, he took his seat in the body of the church. But how great was his surprise? An entire revolution had been effected in the music. As not one of the brethren of the church had acquired sufficient knowledge in music to assume the direction, it devolved on a young gentleman of some standing, who was a mere amateur, possessed of a worldly spirit, and a decided taste for musical sentimentality and artistic display. He was surrounded with performers of a similar stamp—and the organist was now in his element, showing off his powers of execution. The members of the former choir had left in disgust, and the whole interest had become secularized. Mr. Heman, in his feebleness, could effect nothing in the way of improvement. If he were to propose a change there was no one who could give direction. Influence, skill, and intelligence were now on the side of the amateurs. He regretted exceedingly that, when he had the sole direction he had not trained others to succeed him. Now it was all too late. His only remedy was patient endurance till the church should learn wisdom by experience. Troubles have since arisen. Many changes have taken place. But there is still a dearth of information, and many years may yet elapse before the right influences will be restored. If we would be permanently useful in this department of Christian effort, we must be careful to diffuse seasonable intelligence and information.

XL.

A BRIGHT EXAMPLE.

"Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways,
To join the choirs above."

DRYDEN.

It is easier to speak of failures than of successes, in the management of choirs. In the one case there is variety of incident; in the other it may happen that nothing very remarkable has occurred. The observation applies to religious transactions in general. History seizes upon the troubles, and disputes, and dissensions, and schisms, which from time to time have agitated the church; and not upon the quiet teachings, the faithful efforts, the calm discussions, and united affections and sympathies which have been witnessed; for the latter are not so fruitful of interesting details as the former, nor are they so readily understood or appreciated. The same remark is applicable to biography; for it often occurs that the lives of some of the most eminently pious men have furnished the fewest materials for a readable volume.

It will not be thought wonderful, then, that so few of our present sketches have delineated scenes of quietude or successful effort; they are not easily described. It must not, however, be inferred that there has been nothing but mismanagement, or that there is any natural tendency in choirs to promote abuses.

There have been many choirs whose history is unblemished and delightful. We will fix upon one as a fair specimen.

In the south-eastern district of the State of K—— lies the fine inland town of O——. The pastor of the first church in this place, himself a tolerable singer and a lover of good psalmody, determined from his first settlement in the ministry, to look well to the interests of church music. He was a man of good mind, pleasant manners, and devoted piety. He had little knowledge of the shoals and quick-sands which occasion so many musical disasters; but by good sense and careful effort under the Divine blessing, he was enabled to steer clear of them.

He was guided by sound principles. He took biblical views of the office of praise. He illustrated them in his teachings from the desk, and lent his assistance and counsel in reducing them to practice. Here lay the secret of his success. All his practical operations were straightforward, judicious, and transparent. The simplest child could understand them. What was more natural, for instance, than that he should have preferred a Christian teacher to one who was destitute of piety? And how naturally, while in the practice-room, would he make discriminations between rehearsing and worshipping, artistic enjoyment and pious feeling, and between apparent and real devotion? These distinctions might not have occurred to him in the desk, but in the practice-room they would be familiarized by personal observation. He was governed by principle rather than by precedent. "Artistic excellences," he said, "were necessarily of a secondary nature. They might have their appropriate place; but the great object was to secure the right treatment of the consecrated language of pious emotion. This, so full of significancy, so pre-eminently spiritual, should have a free, heart-felt utterance in praise, just as in prayer; and this

would not be achieved, unless there was a *practical* recognition of this principle in the hours of rehearsal." Here, again, the suggestion was a perfectly natural one. He could not see why a devotional frame of mind was not as necessary to prepare us for praise as for prayer or preaching; or why musical drilling, however important in itself, should form a substitute for such preparation. Rehearsals, therefore, were conducted in accordance with religious order; and the occasional exercise of prayer and devotional singing in those seasons of practice, had a delightful tendency. The practice-room was never a scene of hurried labor or perplexity, or ill-timed sociability. A sweet and gentle influence seemed to pervade all the exercises. They were attended with much enjoyment; for never does sacred music appear so interesting as when the heart is kept in tune by the contemplation of spiritual objects. The exercises were sufficiently varied and discriminating. There was no lack of ardor. There were diligence and punctuality. But the efforts were the natural offspring of Christian principle. Taste was not neglected. Science was not undervalued; for there was careful, judicious, and critical drilling. Yet everything occurred in its right relations; because intelligent experience lent its unfailing guidance in the operations.

But how shall we describe the happy influences of such a choir, upon the devotions of the assembly? They did not produce raptures. They did not act upon the cumbrous heels of a concert-loving auditory. Nor had they any soporific tendency. They were not playing upon the fancy, nor dealing with the imagination, but making their way directly to the heart of Christian susceptibility. They were attended at once with power, and with deep and tender solemnity. The tunes were such as could be appreciated by the congregation. The assembly often joined with the choir in full chorus, and felt that praise

was the sweetest and liveliest emblem of the harmonious activities of the sanctuary above.

It is easy to secure right influences in the exercises of praise, when artistic preparations have been guided by Christian principle.

CONCLUSION.

FROM the preceding sketches, it appears obvious, that, in the multitude of cases, there is no real necessity for trouble or embarrassment in sustaining the office of praise. We are not called upon to depreciate musical excellence, nor to take the extreme position of those who deify art. We are under no necessity of countenancing pernicious habits or prejudices, or of consulting discordant notions or conflicting diversities in taste. We are under no necessity of leaving this precious interest a prey to ill-management or untoward motives or propensities. There is no need of the decay of voices, or the degeneracy of practical skill ; for talent and taste lie fairly within the province of cultivation. There is no need of tolerating abuses, as if they were incurable. There is no need of employing bad organists, inefficient choristers, or immoral or incompetent teachers. There is no need of encouraging ignorance, or stupidity, or frivolity, either among singers or auditors. There is no need of encouraging mal-adaptations of music, or inappropriate sentimentalities. Nor yet is there any need of disaffection, disunion, or unhallowed ambition, or lawless contention. For all these seeming incurables, there is a sure remedy ; and one which in most cases may be easily and effectively applied. We have only to take the Bible in hand, which establishes the office of praise, and to follow its teachings implicitly, without yielding to the unauthorized opinions of men.

The claims of art have, on the one hand, been undervalued and despised, and, on the other, exalted to an injurious superiority over the interests of spiritual worship. Either extreme is wrong. These claims should be rightly adjusted. Let sound intelligence and enlightened Christian experience be our guides in this matter, and there need be nothing to fear.

All the peculiar difficulties which have arisen may be traced to one leading cause. The office of praise connects æsthetic considerations with devotional sentiments and purposes. We incline to seize upon the former for the purpose of enjoyment, and treat the latter as auxiliary concomitants. Let us reverse this order of things. Let us give devotional considerations the highest place. Let us, as Christians, assume all the practical responsibilities which the Bible imposes upon us, and we will find abundant cause for unanimity and self-denying, conscientious efforts. Such efforts are sure to meet the approbation of Heaven, and afford ultimately the richest spiritual enjoyment.

The office of praise is essentially important. It cannot be desecrated, or even neglected, without serious injury to the cause of Christ. Christians should think of this and lay it to heart. This subject is rendered the more important at the present day, by the increasing attention which is paid to the art in our country. New habits and associations are being formed, which should not be left to the uncertain guidance of popular opinion. The subject must be investigated and acted upon. Taste, as well as religion, requires that it should be better understood and appreciated.

The present condition of psalmody in our country is one which is full of interest. There is much in it to encourage hope, and much to awaken solicitude. The question whether the praises of Zion shall become as sounding brass or a tinkling symbol, or whether they shall be to the honor and glory of

Zion's King, is truly a momentous one. How shall this question be decided? It is not a question of art. Churches and pastors must take part in this decision, or certainly it will go against them by default. Amateurs and artists are putting forth unwonted efforts. New foundations are being laid. Christians and Christian ministers should inform themselves and awake to effort.

